

# Language and the Sustainable Development Goals

Selected proceedings of the 12th Language and  
Development Conference

Dakar, Senegal, 2017

Edited by Philip Harding-Esch with Hywel Coleman

So far, language has largely been relegated to the periphery of development decision making spaces; this absence of language in development discourse has constituted a significant obstacle to progress. This volume provides an opportunity for stakeholders from different disciplines to reflect on the relationships between language and development in the context of three sub-themes of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 1. Multilingualism for quality, equitable and inclusive education; 2. Language, skills and sustainable economic growth; and 3. Communication, peace and justice. The contributions focus on inclusive language policy and practice within education, trade, creative expression, justice and peacebuilding. The chapters are insightful and enlightening in advancing the debate on the interplay between language and development, particularly with respect to the implementation of the SDGs. The book is certainly a rich addition to the body of literature on language and development.

**Francisco Matsinhe Sozinho**

Former Executive Secretary, African Academy of Languages; former Deputy Executive Secretary, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa; Trustee, Language and Development Conference Series

This volume significantly advances critiques of the role of language in sustainable development. Contributors build on previous criticism which has highlighted the invisibility of language within development initiatives, specifically focusing on the SDGs. In covering a range of geographical and thematic contexts, the volume identifies what must be done to ensure that individuals in multilingual environments can effectively engage with educational, economic and legal systems. Through considering the importance of language across a range of SDGs, the need to adopt an interdisciplinary perspective in researching language and development issues is made clear. The volume also shows that researchers and practitioners working within the field of language and sustainable development must give sufficient attention to knowledge from the Global South and reject the hegemony of knowledge from the Global North. This is a must-read for anyone interested in language and development.

**Colin Reilly**

Senior Research Officer, University of Essex, UK; Secretary, Language in Africa Special Interest Group of the British Association of Applied Linguistics

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[www.langdevconferences.org](http://www.langdevconferences.org)

Philip Harding-Esch with Hywel Coleman (eds)

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# The Language and Development Conferences and related publications

The Language and Development Conferences take place every two years. They bring together professionals who share an interest in the roles that languages play in development. The conferences address issues of world, national, second and minority languages in relation to human, social, cultural and economic development.

Details of the conference trustees, sponsors and conference hosts are available on the Language and Development Conference Series website: [www.langdevconferences.org](http://www.langdevconferences.org)

All the conference publications can be accessed on the same website.

Additionally, those published by the British Council can be accessed at: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications>

**1993** 1st Language and Development Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.

Theme: Issues in language and development.

- Kenny, B & Savage, W (eds) (1997) *Language and development: Teachers in a changing world*. London: Longman.

**1995** 2nd Language and Development Conference, Bali, Indonesia.

Theme: Language and communication in development: Stakeholders' perspectives.

- Crooks, T & Crewes, G (eds) (1995) *Language and development*. Denpasar: Indonesia Australia Language Foundation.
- Crooks, T (ed.) (1996) *ESP in Southeast Asia*. Denpasar: Indonesia Australia Language Foundation.

**1997** 3rd Language and Development Conference, Langkawi, Malaysia.

Theme: Access, empowerment, opportunity.

- Abdullah, A & Crocker, T et al. (eds) (1998) *Language in development: Access, empowerment, opportunity*. Kuala Lumpur: National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN).

**1999** 4th Language and Development Conference, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Theme: Partnership and interaction in language and development.

- Shaw, J, Lubelska, D & Noulet, M (eds) (2000) *Partnership and interaction*. Bangkok: Asian Institute of Technology.

**2001** 5th Language and Development Conference, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Theme: Defining the role of language in development.

- LoBianco, J (ed.) (2002) *Voices from Phnom Penh: Development and language: Global influences and local effects*. Melbourne: Language Australia.

**2003** 6th Language and Development Conference, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Theme: Linguistic challenges to national development and international Co-operation.

- Coleman, H, Gulyamova, J & Thomas, A (eds) (2005) *National development, education and language in Central Asia and beyond*. Tashkent: British Council, Uzbekistan.

**2005** 7th Language and Development Conference, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Theme: Language and development.

- Coleman, H (ed.) (2007) *Language and development: Africa and beyond*. Addis Ababa: British Council, Ethiopia.

**2009** 8th Language and Development Conference, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Theme: Language and development: Sociocultural issues and challenges.

- Savage, W (ed.) (2015) *Language and development: Sociocultural issues and challenges*. Published online by the Trustees of the Language and Development Conferences Series.

<b>2011</b>	9th Language and Development Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka.  Theme: Language and social cohesion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coleman, H (ed.) (2015) <i>Language and social cohesion in the developing world</i>. Colombo: British Council and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.</li></ul>	<b>2017</b>	12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, Senegal.  Theme: Language and the Sustainable Development Goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harding-Esch, P with Coleman, H (eds) (2021) <i>Language and the Sustainable Development Goals</i>. London: British Council.</li></ul>
<b>2013</b>	10th Language and Development Conference, Cape Town, South Africa.  Theme: Opportunity, equity and identity beyond 2015. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• McIlwraith, H (ed.) (2014) <i>The Cape Town Language and Development Conference: Looking beyond 2015</i>. London: British Council.</li></ul>	<b>2019</b>	13th Language and Development Conference and 6th Multilingual Education Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.  Theme: Inclusion, mobility and multilingual education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• McIlwraith, H (ed.) (forthcoming) <i>The inclusion, mobility and multilingual education conference: Exploring the roles of languages for education and development</i>. London: British Council.</li></ul>
<b>2015</b>	11th Language and Development Conference, New Delhi, India.  Theme: Multilingualism and development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coleman, H (ed.) (2017) <i>Multilingualisms and development</i>. London: British Council.</li></ul>		

# Acknowledgements

## The editors

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## The Language and Development Conferences trustees

The LDC trustees are grateful to the British Council for hosting the 12th Language and Development Conference and publishing the proceedings, and for its long-standing support of the LDC series.

## The British Council

The British Council values its long-standing partnership with the LDC trustees and the ongoing achievements of this collaboration. We acknowledge, as in previous events, the substantial contribution that the trustees have made to the success of this latest LDC. In addition, we greatly appreciate the work of the volume editors in preparing selected conference papers for publication.

We are also very grateful for the support and generous contributions made by our conference partners:

- the government of Dakar: Ministere de l'Education Nationale, Senegal, and Ministere de l'Enseignement Superieur et de la Recherche, Senegal
- the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)
- Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)
- SOAS, University of London
- SIL Africa
- the Dakar-based offices of UNESCO
- the US State Department in Senegal.

# Notes on terminology

## Language names

These chapters vary in the names that they use to refer to certain languages. This variety has been preserved to reflect the diversity of language names and their spellings. Examples include Jola, which may also appear as Dioula, Diola, Joola or Jula; or Pulaar, which may also appear as Fula, Fulani, Fulfuldé, Pular or Peul.

## Categorising languages

### Local language/indigenous language/non-dominant language:

**language:** in this book, most contributors use the term 'local language' to describe languages spoken by one or more ethnolinguistic groups in a country.

Note: the term 'indigenous language' is *langue autochtone* in French (not *indigène*, which is a problematic term).

**National language** may refer to:

- in francophone Africa (*langue nationale*): a local/indigenous language which may or may not have been granted a degree of recognition by the state
- in most countries: a language that is an official or *de facto* language of the state.

**International language:** a language spoken in multiple countries; in Sub-Saharan Africa, this is typically a European language (e.g. French in Senegal).

**Official language:** a language which has been designated by law as an official language of a state, to be used in governance and education systems.

**Mother tongue/home language/first language/L1:** the language learned by a child in the home.

**Language of instruction/medium of instruction:** the language in which curriculum content is taught.

## Teacher training

Increasingly, the term 'teacher training' is considered to be ambiguous (Medgyes & Malderez, 1996). It is often replaced by two terms: (pre-service) **teacher education** and (in-service) **teacher development** (see, for example, Malderez & Wedell, 2007). These terms can also be seen as top-down; **teacher learning** provides an alternative.

However, 'teacher training' is an official term still used in many education systems. For that reason it is used by several contributors to this volume.

Malderez, A & Wedell, M (2007) *Teaching Teachers: Processes and Practices*. London: Continuum.

Medgyes, P & Malderez, A (eds) (1996) *Changing Perspectives in Teacher Education*. London: Heinemann.

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## Foreword

*Alison Devine, Portfolio Lead English in Education, Sub-Saharan Africa, British Council*

It seems fitting that the 12th biennial Language and Development Conference (LDC) should be hosted by Senegal, a country with close to 40 languages among only 16 million inhabitants. Likewise, that it was the third such event held in Africa – after Addis Ababa in 2005 and Cape Town in 2013 – given that the continent is home to around one-third of the world's languages despite having only 17 per cent of its population.

With more than 40 countries represented by over 250 delegates, 125 of whom participated as speakers, this was the first LDC to be held in English and French, with presentations given in both languages and simultaneous interpretation provided. The organisers were also proud to run a session with the official parliamentary translators of Senegal, which was simultaneously translated into all six of the indigenous languages recognised in the Senegalese parliament: Wolof, Seereer, Pulaar, Mandinka, Soninke and Jola.

Further significance of hosting the 2017 conference in Dakar is that Senegal is one of the first francophone African countries to participate in the British Council's English Connects programme, a key objective of which is to strengthen the quality of English language teaching in basic education. The British Council has a long history of support to both the Senegalese Ministry of Education, through its Bureau d'Anglais, and the Association of Teachers of English in Senegal (ATES). English Connects aligns with the British Council's mission to promote English as a key skill alongside, not instead of, local languages and French.

This event also marked the first time that the British Council worked closely with La Francophonie (OIF) on a project of this magnitude. We were particularly pleased to open the conference with a message from Hamidou Seydou Hanafiou, OIF Programme Specialist and Co-ordinator of its ELAN-Afrique initiative which supports schools across francophone Africa to implement a model of bilingual education in French and one of 35 local languages. Two chapters in this book present case studies from the ELAN-Afrique programme.

Other noteworthy, and much valued, contributions of Senegal to this conference include:

- a keynote address from Ahmeth Diouf, Senegalese Supreme Court Lawyer, who is also known for co-translating the Senegalese Constitution into Wolof, the lingua franca used in most of the country
- colleagues from Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD) who contributed to the organisation of the conference, and several Senegalese researchers who have provided chapters to this book
- a chapter from a significant UK–Senegal partnership: SOAS's LILIEMA project working on an innovative language-independent literacy programme in the very multilingual region of Casamance.

A significant event at the conference was the launch of the British Council's position paper *English language and medium of instruction in basic education in low- and middle-income countries: A British Council perspective*.<sup>1</sup> This positions 'English in mother tongue-based multilingual education, and seeks to prevent misconceptions arising about the British Council seeking to promote English over mother tongue':

*English is best served through strengthening the teaching of English as a subject. Therefore, English as the medium of instruction at primary school level in low- or middle-income countries is not always beneficial nor is it a policy or practice we support.*

The paper was greatly welcomed by conference delegates, not least as Senegal is a regional leader in terms of codifying and recognising national languages for deployment in parliament, education and beyond – some of these initiatives are explored in chapters in this book.

1. See [https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/K068\\_EMI\\_position\\_low-and\\_middle-income\\_countries\\_Final.pdf](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/K068_EMI_position_low-and_middle-income_countries_Final.pdf)

The British Council not only promotes English around the world, but also multilingualism in the UK. Indeed the UK is itself very multilingual, with established policies supporting Welsh in Wales, Irish and Ulster-Scots in Northern Ireland, and Gaelic and Scots in Scotland; and with over 1.5 million bilingual school children (around 20 per cent of all school children), representing over 340 home languages in London alone. We welcome chapters in this book which make the link between multilingualism in the Global South and in refugee communities, along with what might be learned from these experiences in the Global North.

The conference theme, Language and the Sustainable Development Goals, is a reminder of the fact that, although language is one of the defining features of our species, when it comes to international and local development discourse, it is often overlooked or left on the periphery.

For human beings to fulfil their potential with dignity and equality, long-lasting progress needs to be viewed from not only an economic perspective but also social and environmental ones. Language and communication are crucial enabling factors, helping societies grow, collaborate and become more inclusive.

In September 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two years on, this 12th Language and Development Conference provided a timely opportunity for the role of language to be explored in achieving these new, ambitious and universal goals.

To keep the promise of the SDGs requires an understanding of the critical role language plays in human development. In seeking to place language at the centre of this long-term process, we explored three of the SDGs in the following sub-themes:

- multilingualism for quality, equitable and inclusive education
- language, skills and sustainable economic growth
- communication, peace and justice.

These themes correspond to three of the SDGs: SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning); SDG 8 (Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all); and SDG 16 (Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies).

We trust that you will enjoy reading in this volume some of the most interesting papers presented at the 2017 conference which helped to make the three-day event a real success.



# 1. Introduction: Languages and the Sustainable Development Goals after Covid-19

Philip Harding-Esch, Lead Editor

The 12th Language and Development Conference (LDC) took place in Dakar, Senegal, from 27 to 29 November 2017 on the theme of Language and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It was the first time an LDC was conducted in French and English and only the second time it was conducted bi- or trilingually.<sup>1</sup> Over 270 papers were submitted from 60 countries, resulting in 100 presentations at the conference. Twenty-one of these papers have been selected for this book.

## What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

The SDGs, adopted by all United Nations (UN) member states in 2015, represent the world's universal framework for sustainable development:

*The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The seventeen Goals are all interconnected, and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve them all by 2030.*

**United Nations (2020)**

The 17 SDGs are:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation

7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reducing inequality
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals.

**United Nations (2015)**

## Why was this theme chosen?

In 2015, the UN adopted the new SDGs for 2015–30, building on the achievements of their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two years on, this conference provided an opportunity to explore the role of language in achieving these new goals.

The focus on language and the SDGs is a logical progression for the LDC series. The UN's development agenda has been the focus of an LDC before: the 10th LDC in 2013 had already focused on the MDGs (see McIlwraith, 2014). Indeed, the LDCs can be considered to represent a useful barometer of emerging themes in attitudes and policy related to language and development. For an overview of the changing relationships between language planning and development since 1945, and the LDCs' reflection of this over time, Hywel Coleman's article 'Milestones in language planning and development aid' (2017) is highly recommended reading.

1. The 6th LDC in Tashkent was conducted in English, Russian and Uzbek.

## Why is it important?

Paulin G Djité reminds us in this book that ‘there is no development without communication’. Yet languages are invisible in the SDGs.

The 17 SDGs are broken down into 169 targets. Progress towards these targets is tracked by country-by-country monitoring of 231 unique indicators (UNSD, 2020). However, language is not mentioned in any of them.

When the SDGs were announced, there was widespread disappointment – even ‘dismay’ as the Study Group on Language and the United Nations called it (Marinotti, 2016: p. 2) – that there was no mention of language. Efforts have since been made among experts in the field of language and development to include an element of language monitoring under SDG 4. One sub-indicator has been adopted which does focus on language, although it remains optional: 4.5.2 Percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction (see Benson, this volume).

A brief look at some of the issues that were considered at the UN as they prepared to operationalise this sub-indicator – such as the ‘monolingual perspective’ of most data sources ‘falling short of class room realities’ (UIS, 2018: p. 11) – is enough to detect some of the recurring themes in this book, for example the difficulty of finding a universal definition applicable to diverse circumstances around the world; and the predominance of ‘Northern’ assumptions in these universal definitions and the collection of data.

Despite issues such as these, the development of sub-indicator 4.5.2 is an achievement which shows that the argument for language and development is being won, to some extent, in the field of education (SDG 4). Indeed, mother tongue-based education has been advocated by UNESCO since 1951 (UNESCO, 1953) and is increasingly being implemented worldwide, at least in early primary grades.

Language remains invisible in all the other SDGs. But even if language is not mentioned explicitly, UNESCO and others have identified where language and multilingualism have a role to play in all the SDGs (e.g. Asia Multilingual Education Working Group, 2017 or UNESCO, 2012 on the MDGs).

This conference chose, as its sub-themes, to look at the language dimension of three SDGs in particular:

- multilingualism for quality, equitable and inclusive education (corresponding to SDG 4: Quality education)
- language, skills and sustainable economic growth (corresponding to SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth)
- communication, peace and justice (corresponding to SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions).

These sub-themes provide the structure of this book.

2. See <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/solutions>

## The impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 has reversed progress on the SDGs. At the launch of their foundation’s *Goalkeepers Report* tracking 18 key SDG indicators in September 2020, Bill and Melinda Gates remarked ‘we’ve been set back 25 years in about 25 weeks’ (Gates Foundation, 2020). Bill Gates also stated that ‘the importance of the goals if anything is reinforced by the pandemic’ (Wulffhorst, 2020) and the *Goalkeepers Report* concludes that ‘what the world does in the next few months matters a great deal’ (Gates Foundation, 2020).

Looking at the three SDGs at the core of this book, the effects of the pandemic will be profound. The World Bank (2020) forecasts ‘the deepest global recession since World War II’. This will lead to an increase in political instability around the world and an undermining of institutions (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020). In education, school and university closures have affected nearly 1.6 billion learners in 195 countries: 94 per cent of the world’s student population, and 99 per cent of those in low- and middle-income countries (United Nations, 2020). This is ‘exacerbating pre-existing education disparities’, with girls particularly at risk of dropping out of school, and will lead to a host of cascading socio-economic consequences (*ibid.*).

The UN celebrates ‘innovation within the education sector’ (*ibid.*) focusing particularly on ‘connectivity’ and remote learning. Indeed, UNICEF (2020) notes that ‘more than 90 per cent of ministries of education enacted some form of policy to provide digital and broadcast remote learning’. However, it also reports that a third of the world’s schoolchildren – 463 million – cannot be reached by remote learning programmes, especially in poor and rural areas; and it is also notable that many of the ‘digital learning solutions’ for schools listed (but not endorsed) by UNESCO’s Education Response website<sup>2</sup> are commercial English-language platforms.

This development goes to the heart of this book.

The pandemic is accelerating a new, urgent global response to the human development crisis: ‘breaking with the past ... redesign[ing] the way we work’ (UNDP, 2020); but it will be a failure if the world’s response to the pandemic leads to the establishment of a more monolingual, top-down hegemony, or a vision of diversity and inclusion that does not have communication and multilingualism at its core.

Now more than ever, we need to think about language and the SDGs.

## Overview of the chapters

Twenty-one chapters were selected representing the diversity of the conference itself. Five were originally written in French; it is important to note that this volume will be published in both French and English with all chapters translated into the other language. Seven chapters are the result of research in Senegal; as with all previous LDCs, there is a mixture of chapters with an international focus and chapters with a local focus on the host country.

The first sub-theme on multilingualism for quality, equitable and inclusive education (corresponding to SDG 4) has been split into two parts (policy and practice) although there is much overlap between the two; and many chapters in this book cut across more than one of the sub-themes and are indeed relevant to SDGs beyond SDGs 4, 8 and 16.

### Part 1: Multilingualism for quality, equitable and inclusive education – perspectives on policy (SDG 4: Quality education)

We begin with three chapters evaluating the current situation of multilingual education in Africa and the Global South more widely, identifying current priorities for this agenda – in particular, valuing and supporting local experiences and initiatives.

**Carol Benson's** chapter is an overview of multilingual education in the learner's home language – what is working and what is slowing us down. She reviews research, policy and practice, as well as evolutions in terminology, including a reminder that there are concepts and terminologies outside the anglophone sphere when considering these issues. She identifies problems including weak multilingual education models such as 'early exit', widespread assessment in L2 (the child's second language) and parents preferring L2 for their children, but also identifies successful initiatives around the world that could be applied to Africa.

Next, **Barbara Trudell** looks at the impact of globalisation on curriculum in Africa. In a context where globalised goals, indicators and curricula are being adopted worldwide, is there space for the local in Africa? This chapter looks at the paradox that globalised curriculum actually results in a diversity of outcomes in practice, due to the decoupling of institutional practice from policy. It describes successful examples of local ownership of curriculum, whose short-lived natures highlight the need for institutional support if such initiatives are to succeed.

**Kathleen Heugh's** chapter is a call to 'reclaim' the centuries of experience in Africa and the Global South in terms of multilingualism. She argues that recent research in this field in the Global North is not superior to, or necessarily transferable to, the long lineage of African scholarship and that there is much the North can learn from the South's experience. She explores the multiplicity of multilingualisms that exist and describes how code-switching, translanguaging and 'transknowledging' form the basis of multilingualism for the 21st century, benefiting all students in all contexts.

Next, we move on to three chapters which show very different examples of initiatives which are rooted in local priorities and grassroots knowledge to achieve successful multilingual education, in ways that can challenge some of the global norms.

**Mary Goretti Nakabugo**, one of the conference keynotes, describes the movement in citizen-led assessment (CLA) which began in India and now takes place in countries around the world, including in East Africa, where over 1.5 million children have been assessed this way – she herself is country co-ordinator for Uganda. CLA has some significant differences compared with traditional learning assessments, such as taking place in the home and being done orally, through volunteers. She describes the principles at work and gives strong evidence of the effectiveness and policy results.

**Shannon Bischoff and Mary Encabo** discuss the value of partnerships between policymakers (top-down) and community-based and grassroots initiatives (bottom-up) and describe three very different case studies of community-led complementary schools in North America – an alternative form of education promoting mother tongue-based education, multilingualism, and multiculturalism. They argue that complementary schools can support the achievement of common goals in sustainable development and that allowing community members some ownership of the sustainable development agenda is crucial, with reference to several SDGs.

Finally, **Friederike Lüpke, Aimé Césaire Biagui, Landing Biaye, Julienne Diatta, Alpha Naby Mané, Gérard Preira, Jérémi Fahed Sagna and Miriam Weidl** describe the LILIEMA project in Casamance, Senegal: a language-independent method for achieving culturally anchored literacy in multilingual contexts. The chapter opens with a critique of the limitations of current mother tongue-based education policies in highly plurilingual societies such as Casamance, where the concept of a single mother tongue as the language of instruction does not correspond with people's lived reality. Inspired by multilingual oral and written communicative practices that already exist and are widespread throughout West Africa, the LILIEMA approach is described in detail with examples and an appraisal of its success.

## Part 2: Multilingualism for quality, equitable and inclusive education – perspectives on practice (SDG 4: Quality education)

We begin this section with three chapters looking at bilingual education models taking place on the ground in Senegal with institutional backing.

**Chris Darby and Jorunn Dijkstra** describe a longitudinal study of the EMiLe bilingual education project in Senegal. They describe how Cummins' language interdependence hypothesis was built into this programme with some necessary compromises, and record substantial success in the bilingual group's literacy results compared to the monolingual group, using early grade reading assessments conducted in the L2, French, which is actually a foreign language to most of the children.

**Ndiémé Sow** presents her research into the implementation of ELAN-Afrique, a major bilingual education programme implemented by La Francophonie in eight African countries, involving 225,000 pupils in 2,500 schools and 35 African languages. As with Lüpke et al., her case study is in Casamance. She concentrates on the choice of the medium of instruction in highly multilingual situations where choosing one language creates competition between languages, a process she calls 'multicephalism'. Based on her analysis of pupils' linguistic repertoires, she argues that language in education policy should evolve towards a more inclusive and plurilingual model.

**Augustin Ndione** also provides an analysis of the ELAN-Afrique programme, this time in a primary school in a village in Thiès region, Senegal. Again focusing on the impact of choosing a language of instruction which, while a 'national language' understood by all pupils, is not their mother tongue, he argues that such a policy carries inherent risks for the preservation of minority languages and their cultures' systems of representation. He presents evidence that parents would prefer to choose their own language if possible.

Finally, two chapters which focus on teachers themselves as perhaps the most important actors in terms of the implementation of language policy in the classroom.

**Caroline Juillard** argues that teachers need to be much better understood by researchers and policymakers. The two case studies she presents from within a single Senegalese primary school show that many teachers replicate the teaching and training which they themselves received, resulting in significant differences between attitudes and multilingual practices in classrooms.

In her chapter, **Ann Rossiter** gives a snapshot of teachers' purposeful multilingual choices in Sierra Leone, where the official medium of instruction is English. Her description of the mismatch between the official policy of English as the medium of instruction and practice in the classroom leads her to argue for an alignment of policy with practice to include translanguaging and a higher profile for, and inclusion of, local languages in education.

## Part 3: Language, skills and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth)

The chapters in this section provide examples of the social and economic benefits of local language literacy, and call for economic policies that include local languages for economic development to include the majority of the population.

Bridging the previous section and this one, **Ian Cheffy** makes an appeal for sustainable development to expand its focus from being too narrowly on children's education by showing the immediately transformative power of adult education. His case studies of three individuals from Kenya, Ethiopia and Cameroon demonstrate tangible improvements in their personal development and social standing, better earnings and more agency in economic activity, and benefits to their immediate communities. This chapter argues that local language literacy for adults is vital if the SDGs are to be achieved.

**Paulin G Djité**, one of the conference keynotes, shows how economic growth in Africa is inequitable and non-inclusive. He specifically looks at the Ebola epidemic in West Africa to show the impact of crises on economic development and the central role of language and communication in development. He argues that one of the main obstacles to inclusive growth is the marginalisation of the great majority of Africans in the economy, undergirded by the lack of a voice through the marginalisation of their languages. He calls for language experts to work with researchers in other disciplines to reach out to policymakers.

**Salikoko S Mufwene**, also a keynote speaker at the conference, considers the 'chicken-and-egg' situation: which comes first, adequate education or economic development? And what is the role of language within this equation? He develops an argument for a shift in how Africa thinks of its education and economy, and that economies need to be diversified to become based on an inclusion of the majority, which means recalibrating economies to be based on local languages and local terms and values, not international languages and values.

## Part 4: Communication, peace and justice (SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions)

In the final section of this book, a common theme is the struggle to find a space for local languages and inclusion in legal and political frameworks that are internationally defined and/or based on the systems and languages of the former colonial powers, or of the host country (for refugees).

**Ahmat Hessana** provides an insight into how a language such as Kalam Arabic, spoken by millions of people across the Lake Chad Basin, covering large parts of the Sahara and Sahel across several countries, can be crucial for peace, justice and social cohesion and yet is poorly

recognised and understood by the international system. He presents three case studies showing the role of this language in galvanising young people and community groups to achieve social rights and democratic and local governance representation, including engaging with the SDGs, and a wider role facilitating social cohesion and intercommunal peace through marriages and funerals.

**Jimmy Harmon** provides a comparative study of local language literacy issues in two neighbouring islands in the South West Indian Ocean: Reunion Island (an administrative division of France) and the Republic of Mauritius. Both settings have French-based Creole as the vernacular language, but this language is a 'site of struggle' of mother tongue-based literacy in education policy in both countries, shaped by different postcolonial legacies and legal/educational frameworks, as it does not necessarily fit the predominant 'one nation' discourse.

The next two chapters look specifically at the legal systems in francophone Africa which are based on French law and conducted in French.

**Natalie Tarr and Aly Sambou** compare the histories and practice of legal translation in the courts of Burkina Faso and Senegal and include data from interviews with judges, court interpreters and prisoners. Although the historical, colonial legacy of the French legal system and language is entrenched in both legal systems, they show that linguistic accommodation does exist in these systems in response to communication necessities. However, they argue that courts are also an extreme manifestation of a perpetuation of colonial power structures through language and that ultimately the justice system fails to provide equal access to justice for all.

In their chapter, **Mouhamed Abdallah Ly, Abdourahmane Seck and Yamar Samb** make a pluridisciplinary argument that the law in Senegal is both inaccessible and unintelligible through its being set and conducted in an obscure form of French; and that this not only perpetuates the concentration of power among a small elite but also undermines democracy and the law itself, because people turn to parallel, customary legal systems and disengage from politics. They discuss the limits of translation and argue instead for a pluridisciplinary, plurilingual and 'multi-legal' approach.

Finally, three chapters explore language issues for refugees in education and more widely, where the links to human rights, identity and acquiring skills are particularly acute and can provide useful universal lessons.

**Chris Sowton** argues that the diverse nature of refugee camps exposes a weakness in the 'Westphalian' SDG model based on international norms and country-specific goals and indicators when the populations concerned are not from the country they reside in, by definition. He discusses the issue of medium of instruction for education; the importance for refugee populations to acquire language skills; and the complexity of language

and power for refugees within camps and outside them, and argues that decisions in these contexts must be rooted in pragmatism.

In his chapter, **Alexis Lefranc** describes his own trajectory as a teacher of English to Syrian refugees in Lebanon as he developed an understanding of digital literacy and information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D). He explains why digital literacy is an essential new skill for development. He argues that the real digital divide is not access to technology but skills in using it, and that development experts must wake up to the importance of this emerging field or risk being sidelined by tech entrepreneurs who may lack the pedagogical and/or policy background.

**Anne Wiseman** describes a British Council project working with the government of Lebanon to integrate Syrian refugees into Lebanese classrooms. She describes how the project's social model of inclusion and a focus on teacher training, including encouraging classroom use of translanguaging, led to positive changes in attitudes, practice and government education policy.

## Key messages from the 12th Language and Development Conference

The following key messages can be identified as emerging from the 12th Language and Development Conference. (Chapters in this book which discuss these issues are indicated in brackets.)

### The SDGs should be updated to include specific references to language (in the targets and their indicators).

- Current international data tools (such as EGRA or TIMMS) should be reappraised with both their value and limitations recognised; and evidence such as that gathered by citizen-led assessment and a more qualitative approach could be integrated further (Trudell, Nakabugo, Benson, Cheffy, and Darby & Dijkstra).

### The SDGs and other global development agendas should evolve to give space to local context and accommodate different value systems.

- We should consider the existence in development of a 'Northern' agenda, built on Western concepts and structures in which business is conducted primarily in the major European languages; and make space for 'Southern' agendas and communication in non-international languages to broaden the scope and meaning of the development agenda (Heugh, Lüpke et al., Trudell, Benson, Djité, Mufwene, Hessana, Bischoff & Encabo, and Sowton).
- Increasing human mobility challenges the development agenda to embrace diversity rather than 'one size fits all' (Heugh and Sowton).

- Development agencies must listen to the populations they work with. This means meaningful consultation with them, in their own languages (Nakabugo, Trudell, Bischoff & Encabo, and Ly et al.).

**The best way to achieve the SDGs is to empower people themselves to do it.**

- The SDGs should be translated into all languages and communicated to all populations in their own languages (Hessana and Ly et al.).
- Locally driven development models are often best – but they need institutional support (Trudell, Bischoff & Encabo, Mufwene, and Djité).
- Languages need to be properly equipped before they can take on the function of being the medium of development, for example through language revitalisation and documentation; work on terminology and codification; clear language and education policies; language status and recognition in institutional structures; and advocacy and changing populations' attitudes towards their own language (Hessana, Tarr & Sambou, Ly et al., and Harmon).

**Policymakers, researchers and people on the ground need to collaborate, and linguists need to recruit other disciplines to the language cause and prove its multidisciplinary relevance (Djité, Trudell, and Bischoff & Encabo).**

- Advocacy is necessary at both policy level and population level. Populations' own preference for an international language over their own is rational and detectable from an early age, but this attitude can be changed with evidence (Lüpke et al., Benson, Sow, and Hessana).
- The Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group<sup>3</sup> has been successful in delivering the right messages at policy level. The creation of a similar group for the Africa region would be welcome (while recognising that regions have differences as well as issues in common).

**SDG 4: Education is foundational to all the SDGs.**

- Mother tongue-based multilingual education is now widely accepted to be the right approach and great progress is being made (Benson and Trudell), although there are issues to be considered in identifying a 'mother tongue' and selecting a single language of instruction in many plurilingual settings (Lüpke et al., Sow, Ndione, Darby & Dijkstra) in terms of effective learning, issues of identity and safeguarding languages and cultures. Further, the development agenda has much to learn from the existing knowledge and experience in the Global South (Heugh, Bischoff & Encabo, and Lüpke et al.).
- There should be more focus on teachers' skills, training and languages (Juillard and Rossiter).

- There should be more citizen-led assessment to measure what is really happening on the ground (Nakabugo).
- Universities' widespread use of English (or other major international languages) as the medium of instruction marginalises most people (Bischoff & Encabo and Mufwene).
- Adult education must be a priority too: literacy changes people's lives (Cheffy and Trudell).

**SDG 8: Language is the foundation of sustainable economic development.**

- Language is the basis of the skills, communication and participation through which populations can play an active role in socio-economic development (Cheffy, Djité, and Mufwene).
- We must develop economies and jobs based on local languages. It is not necessarily the case that international languages are key to economic development (Djité and Mufwene).

**SDG 16: Peace, justice and democracy cannot be achieved without taking into account language rights/language status (Hessana, Harmon, Ly et al., and Tarr & Sambou).**

- Institutional structures based on ex-colonial languages, structures and laws perpetuate the dominance of these ex-colonial languages and power structures, to the exclusion of most people. Populations have no faith in institutions and systems which are not in their language (Ly et al. and Tarr & Sambou).
- Regional and national judicial, legal and institutional systems can learn from the pioneering work and expertise of the International Criminal Court.
- Language rights are central to education which is inclusive of groups such as refugees, internally displaced persons and deaf people (Sowton and Wiseman).
- Digital literacy is an emerging divide in sustainable development (Lefranc).

If there is a unifying thread across this book, it is that the SDGs are global, by definition – but their real application is local, even individual. This book is about how these two ends of the spectrum interact and influence each other, a process which, to be inclusive for all, can only be done through language and communication.

We hope readers find these chapters useful and that they will contribute to the post-Covid-19 sustainable development agenda, and the place of language within it.

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# Part 1

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**Multilingualism for quality,  
equitable and inclusive education  
– perspectives on policy  
(SDG 4: Quality education)**



## 2. L1-based multilingual education: What is working and what is slowing us down

Carol Benson

### Abstract

This chapter analyses research and practice in multilingual education (MLE) based on the learner's home language (L1). It begins with a look back at experimentation in MLE in Guinea-Bissau, where many of the issues I discussed in my early research in West Africa (Benson, 1994) have proved to be salient in other multilingual contexts. Even up to the present day, issues of language access, public support, pedagogical design and educational policy continue to challenge MLE implementation, despite the fact that L1-based MLE is now widely understood to be the right thing to do (Benson & Wong, 2015). I review current terminology, which differs to some degree by geographic region and according to postcolonial or other dominant language influence, noting pedagogical and scholarly contributions underlying the concepts. I then review effective practices in MLE in multilingual African contexts. I proceed to an exploration of challenges that slow implementation of MLE, including adoption of weak models and assessment only in dominant languages. Finally, I describe some ways forward, along with some strategies from other parts of the world that could be applied in multilingual African contexts.

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse research and practice in MLE based on the learner's L1. This is a field in which I have worked for many years, so I have had the opportunity to see it grow and develop. In the 1970s it was usually called bilingual education, and it involved the use of the learner's home language (or a relatively familiar community language) in an experimental or pilot primary school project in countries where the 'normal' form of education used a dominant language that was not very familiar to learners or even teachers. There were exceptions; for example, in Guinea following independence, Seikou Touré famously implemented primary education in eight major national languages – Soso, Mandinka, Pulaar, Kissié, Kpele, Loma, Wameym and Oneyan – in an effort to de-colonise Guinean minds (Camara, 2006). In Tanzania under Julius Nyerere, *Education for Self-Reliance* (Nyerere, 1968) brought Kiswahili, a widely spoken lingua franca, into the schools in an effort to unify the country with a language other than a colonial one (Obanya, 2002). Unfortunately, these efforts were few, and overall it has been a struggle for many decades to bring the strongest languages of

learners and their teachers into formal education systems. Fortunately, there have been and still are strong advocates for L1-based MLE in multilingual African contexts (see, for example, Bamgbose, 1991, 2000; Djité, 2008; ADEA, 2010; Ouane & Glanz, 2011) and others around the world (see, for example, García et al., 2006 on Latin America and Kosonen, 2017 on Southeast Asia).

As I write this chapter, I am happy to report that steps have been taken in recognising the essential role played by learners' languages and ways of knowing in the provision of educational access and the improvement of educational quality. We know that providing at least initial literacy and instruction in learners' L1s has the potential to improve educational access, quality and equity, particularly for traditionally marginalised groups (UNESCO, 2010, 2012). Language may not be the only factor in improving educational quality, but it is now understood to be the root cause of school wastage (repetition, failure, drop-out) as well as the high rate of out-of-school youth in many contexts (Benson, 2014; Heugh, 2011; Walter & Benson, 2012). Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 4.5 sends out a call to 'eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, [I]ndigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations' (UNESCO, 2015: p. 17), which inherently includes addressing language issues. Fortunately, policymakers, practitioners and communities have all come a long way in their understandings of how to implement programmes that promote bi- or multilingual competencies while facilitating learner achievement. As a technical assistant and researcher in what is now called L1-based MLE, I believe that we are now much better positioned to move forward with a form of education that is more inclusive and meaningful, and that allows learners to achieve their full potential.

Research and practice in African contexts has contributed to our understandings. While many theoretical principles of bilingual education were established based on research in North America (e.g. Cummins, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002), they have been substantiated and expanded in countries like Eritrea and Ethiopia, whose systems use learners' home languages for up to eight years of primary schooling (Walter & Davis, 2005; Heugh et al., 2012). Use of learners' L1s has been linked to increased parent involvement (Ball, 2010) and greater

participation of girls and women in education (Hovens, 2002; Benson, 2004; Lewis & Lockheed, 2012). More and more, countries whose education systems have traditionally depended on former colonial or other dominant languages are bringing non-dominant languages into at least lower primary levels. Our study of the UNESCO Global Monitoring Reports (Benson & Wong, 2015) found evidence that the early grade reading assessment (EGRA), despite limitations such as failing to account for linguistic variation (Schroeder, 2013; Graham & van Ginkel, 2014), appears to have raised awareness among development professionals that L1-based MLE is more effective than other forms of education.

L1-based MLE is often designed for members of non-dominant groups, in contexts where intersecting social and economic disadvantages related to poverty, geography, ethnicity, religion, gender and other factors create obstacles to school attendance and completion (Ball, 2010). In this way, MLE offers a pathway for addressing SDG 4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as mentioned above, to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all' (UNESCO, 2016). The 'for all' in this goal should not be underestimated. MLE is arguably relevant for all learners in the 21st century, since those with oral and written proficiencies in multiple languages will be best able to link local and regional to international domains in this rapidly globalising world (Benson and Elorza, 2015).

Because the potential of MLE is great, there are justifiably high expectations for MLE programmes. Meanwhile, there are many challenges, particularly in low-income contexts. One is the widespread adoption of early-exit transitional models rather than more additive, pedagogically sound approaches to language learning. Another is the slow response of education systems to develop appropriate mechanisms for recruitment, training, placement and compensation of MLE teachers. Systems of assessment can also be a challenge if they are only or mainly in dominant languages, because they fail to show what learners can do. Causing and compounding all of these challenges are the often impossibly high aspirations of stakeholders from parents to politicians for proficiency in dominant national or international languages, to the detriment of good pedagogy and effective learning.

I begin this chapter with a look back at experimentation in MLE in Guinea-Bissau, where many of the issues I discussed in my early research in West Africa (Benson, 1994) have proved to be salient in other multilingual contexts. I then review current terminology, which differs to some degree by geographic region and according to postcolonial or other dominant language influence,

making particular note of the pedagogical and scholarly traditions underlying the concepts. Next, I discuss effective practices in MLE up to now, along with remaining issues. I proceed to the challenges, or what is slowing down implementation of MLE, including adoption of weak models and assessment only in dominant languages. I conclude with some efforts to address these and other challenges, along with some ways forward inspired by an L1 writing assessment in Cambodia and the Seal of Biliteracy in the US. Both are strategies that could be applied in multilingual African contexts, to take L1-based MLE into the future and improve education for all.

## Language-in-education experimentation in Guinea-Bissau

My research in MLE began with a year of fieldwork in Guinea-Bissau in the early 1990s. Guinea-Bissau's population of approximately 1.7 million are speakers of 18 Indigenous<sup>1</sup> languages. Nearly half of the population speak Kiriol (Guinean Creole) as a first or second language, while only 11 per cent claim to speak Portuguese, the former colonial language (Eberhard et al., 2020). I was interested in analysing an experiment to determine whether Kiriol, a lingua franca and second language (L2) for most learners, could function as *if* it were the L1 to teach literacy and other curricular content in a bilingual education model where Portuguese, the official language, would be taught as *if* it were the L2. In reality, learners in the rural north, south and west of the country chosen for the experiment were speakers of Manjako, Balanta and Bijagó, respectively. As readers will recognise, this sociolinguistic situation where there are three types of language – a mother tongue (L1), lingua franca (L2) and colonial language (L3) – is very common in multilingual African contexts as well as in places like India, where the 'three-language formula' has been practised in education policy in many states since independence (Pattanayak, 2003). However, the CEEF (Centros Experimentais de Educação y Formação) Project, as the bilingual experiment in Guinea-Bissau was known, was conducted in only the L2 and L3, ignoring learners' actual L1s.

CEEF, which functioned between 1986 and 1994, adopted what would now be known as an early-exit transitional model of bilingual education, where Kiriol was used during primary Grades 1 to 3, after which there was a relatively abrupt switch to Portuguese as the medium of instruction. All materials were developed by the project to be culturally relevant. Implementing this model in three rural parts of the country, the Guinean project implementers believed, would demonstrate whether a widely spoken lingua franca could facilitate learning even for children beginning school with only (or mainly)

1. Scholars now capitalise the term Indigenous, as I do here, to emphasise the long-standing geographic presence of ethnolinguistic groups marginalised through centuries of 'othering' (Ricento, 2005).

L1 proficiency. The research I conducted with Guinean researchers during the 1992–93 school year included observations, interviews, family language surveys, oral and written language assessment, and assessment in mathematics and other content areas. We were able to include two Portuguese-medium ‘control’ groups for comparison purposes: students in traditional classes and students receiving intensive Portuguese language exposure. We spoke with the families of 950 students and assessed 1,012 students in Kiriol and Portuguese (Benson, 1994).

The results of our research were highly favourable to CEEF. Students learning in Kiriol participated actively in their classrooms, even correcting teachers if there was a mistake on the board, while students in Portuguese-medium classrooms were silent or chorused ‘sim’ or ‘não’ (‘yes’ or ‘no’) in response to closed questions. CEEF learners were happy, liked school and appeared to have high self-esteem. CEEF parents were unafraid to approach the teachers with questions about their children’s learning. Girls, over-represented among those failing and dropping out of traditional classes, stayed and were successful in CEEF classes, challenging the stereotype of their being less able than boys (Benson, 2005). Finally, communities were pleased to see their languages read and written, and to see community values respected.

We were also able to show with our language assessment data that no matter what form of schooling or proximity to cities, proficiency in Portuguese was an elusive goal, even after four or more years of schooling. Table 1 shows the average year-end results of our individually administered assessment of oral language by grade and region.

We assessed students on a scale of 0 to 5, from ‘no skills’ to ‘proficient native-like speakers,’ where 3 was defined as having ‘survival’ communication skills. As the table shows, most students still had low proficiency in Portuguese even after four years (or more, since most in the traditional system repeated one or more years) of primary education. Whether they were in experimental bilingual classes or in traditional or enhanced Portuguese-medium classes, the results were remarkably similar, which would suggest that

students need longer and higher-quality exposure to this foreign language if it is to be a viable school language. Put another way, Portuguese is simply not widely spoken by adults or children in Guinea-Bissau, making it an inappropriate language to use at any level of education.

The mistake that we made at the time, and that many other bi- or multilingual programmes continue to make to this day, is to assume that both experimental and ‘control’ classes should be assessed in the ‘target’ or dominant language. That is, because the goal of the experiment was for students to be able to cope with Portuguese-medium content by Grade 4, and because we were comparing CEEF students with those learning through Portuguese, we only assessed the content areas in Portuguese and then compared the results across programmes. While the CEEF students did slightly better than most others in mathematics and natural sciences, we had hoped for more dramatic differences that would conclusively demonstrate the effectiveness of learning bilingually. However, a comparison of assessment results in Portuguese did not ‘prove’ that the experiment was worth the effort and expense, and when the project ended, so did the idea of bringing Kiriol officially into the Guinean education system.

We were left with trying to explain why the experimental cohort did not do better on assessments. One reason, we felt, was that by Grade 4 the cohorts were not really compatible because the CEEF students had progressed through the grades without obstacles, while those in the Portuguese-medium programmes had often repeated grades, making them on average over two years older than CEEF students. Further, those who made it to Grade 4 in Portuguese-medium classes were a select group, since those who did not succeed had dropped out, while the CEEF classes included everyone who had begun in Grade 1. We further felt that the early-exit model adopted by CEEF did not maximise the potential of Kiriol to facilitate learning. Fortunately, one decision that was made in the CEEF schools was to continue with the study of the L1 as a subject through the end of primary school, which we believe strengthened learners’ literacy as much as possible and gave them a good start in their school careers.

**Table 1:** Results of oral Portuguese assessment (scale 0–5). Adapted from Benson (2003, p. 173)

Primary student population tested	Number in sample	Grade			
		1	2	3	4
Rural students (CEEF sites)	493	1.1	1.4	2.0	2.3
Semi-urban students	234	1.4	1.6	2.8	-
Urban students (Bissau)	169	1.3	1.7	2.5	-

I have used the terms 'bilingual education' and 'early-exit transitional model' to discuss the CEEF experiment in Guinea-Bissau, and I have alluded to some of the challenges we encountered at that time. Nearly 25 years later, our knowledge about effective learning models for multilingual learners has expanded and our terminology has evolved. In the next section I discuss some key concepts to understanding MLE.

## Key concepts, definitions and their implications

Beginning with the term 'L1-based multilingual education', which I already used above, this has become an umbrella term for a range of programmes in the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions. This is regrettable, because it was never meant to represent programmes with minimal use of the L1 (Kosonen & Benson, 2013). L1-based MLE refers to the purposeful and systematic use of learners' strongest languages for literacy and learning, accompanied by the explicit teaching of new languages, with the aim of educating learners who speak, read and write two or more languages (García, 2009). The aim of such an MLE programme is for learners to become *multilingual* and *multiliterate* as well as achieving the other goals of the curriculum. Inherent in the term is the concept that non-linguistic curricular content like mathematics or science is taught in one or more languages depending on learners' proficiency levels and prior exposure to the content. For example, new content should most often be taught in the L1, after which it can be practised or reviewed in a less familiar language.

The success of the 'L1-based' part of the term has been to distinguish between programmes designed for the elite to learn dominant international languages and programmes tailored to give speakers of non-dominant languages access to basic education and explicit teaching of additional (dominant) languages. In addition, *multilingual* has been substituted for bilingual to encompass dual-language situations while making space for the teaching and learning of more than two languages – which is often the case in multilingual African or Asian contexts.

Unfortunately, not everyone is aware that learners should fully develop oral, written and analytical skills in one of their strongest languages to reap the benefits of transfer to additional languages. Many programmes which are mistakenly put under the umbrella term use the L1 for only a very short period of time, limiting L1 use to pre-primary or the early years of primary schooling. They are in a rush to make the dominant language the medium of instruction, whether or not learners have developed the appropriate cognitive skills in the L1 so that they have

a literacy and learning foundation to build upon. I discuss the challenge of such short-sighted programmes below, noting how difficult it is for them to demonstrate learning success, even if there is a 'feel-good' component of bringing the L1 into schools that have traditionally ignored or devalued it.

There are lessons to be learned from two related terms from particular contexts. In African countries with historical ties to France, the term *pédagogie convergente*, or convergent pedagogy, refers to a programme that values the mother tongue for giving structure to the learner's thought and personality and aims for 'functional bilingualism' (Traoré, 2001: p. 6). This term reminds us to bring instruction closer to learners to 'converge' with their identities. In Latin America, the term *educación intercultural bilingüe* (EIB), or bilingual intercultural education, involves not only languages – an Indigenous L1 and Spanish or Portuguese – but also the cultural values and practices associated with them. The *intercultural* component is meant to integrate local cultural values and lifeways into the curriculum, linking learners' experiences and knowledge to new knowledge. According to López (2006), this explicit valuing of learners' cultures should not only support learning but also raise learners' self-esteem and empower them to address power differences between dominant cultural values and their own. In programmes called L1-based MLE, cultural relevance is often part of the materials and the teaching, but it is not always explicit in the instructional approach, so this is an area that could be further developed.

## Multilingual African contexts where MLE is working

Unfortunately, if we consider the models of educational language use in policy and practice in African contexts, the overwhelming majority would be considered early-exit transitional. As mentioned above in the case of the Guinea-Bissau experiment, that model uses a familiar language or L1 for beginning literacy and instruction only, followed by a rapid phase-out in favour of an official or dominant language.

One exception to the early-exit model, as reviewed in Heugh (2011), is the use of a single national language throughout primary school, as practised in Tanzania with Kiswahili, in Somalia with Somali and in Madagascar with Malagasy, though in the latter case the policy has swung back and forth between Malagasy and French (Dahl, 2011). This model has been criticised in a number of contexts (see, for example, Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999 in the case of Botswana) for excluding L1 speakers of other national languages.

Another exception is the well-documented Six-Year Yoruba Medium Primary Project in Nigeria, where Yoruba was used as medium of instruction for L1 speakers in what is considered a late-exit transitional model, where English would become the medium only after six years of primary education. Not only did learners participate actively in their classes, it was demonstrated that the L1 facilitated literacy and learning, and did not in any way prevent learners from gaining proficiency in the dominant language (Bamgbose, 1991, 2000; Fafunwa et al., 1989). As Heugh (2011) also points out, with quality teacher preparation and materials development, this experiment was able to provide results that demonstrated the effectiveness of bilingual education (what we would now call L1-based MLE). My only critique, with the benefit of hindsight, is that there was not more documentation of Yoruba literacy development and how learners transferred skills from L1 Yoruba to L2 English. As was the case of CEEF in Guinea-Bissau, the focus on comparing bilingual and non-bilingual ('control') cohorts meant focusing on assessment in the dominant language.

What appears to be the strongest model of MLE practised in multilingual African contexts is an L1-based model that covers the eight-year primary cycle in Eritrea and in Ethiopia. Some years ago, Walter and Davis (2005) documented the effectiveness of Eritrea's eight-year L1-based education (see also Hailemariam et al., 1999, who call this a *developmental maintenance* model because it promotes development of high-level L1 skills) based on a national reading survey conducted by the

Ministry of Education in 2002. They found that despite limitations in teacher training and materials, children were learning to read and were staying in school longer when their L1s were used for instruction. Walter and Davis also found that learners were not adequately prepared for a switch to English as medium of instruction at Grade 6, given low teacher proficiency, lack of materials and lack of exposure to English. Unfortunately, according to UNICEF (2016), it is still common for schools to shift to English before the end of the eight years, which would mean that the model is really late-exit transitional in many cases.

Ethiopia appears to have the strongest model of MLE to date, based on its language-in-education policy of 1994 calling for a full eight-year primary cycle of L1-based literacy and instruction, along with the teaching of national language (L2) Amharic beginning in Grades 3 or 5 (for the 73 per cent of students who do not have Amharic as L1) and international language (L3) English beginning in Grade 1. The policy is bilingual for L1 speakers of Amharic and trilingual for speakers of other languages (L1 + Amharic + English). Based on countrywide research in 2006–07 on the variable implementation of the policy, with updates in 2011, our combined Ethiopian and international team (Heugh et al., 2012) demonstrated with national Grade 8 assessment score averages from 2000, 2004 and 2008 that students taught and assessed in their L1 for eight years outperformed those taught and assessed in English (L3), as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Achievement score averages (in percentage) by L1 versus English medium of instruction for three national assessments of Grade 8 students in Ethiopia (adapted from Heugh et al., 2012, p. 243)

Year of assessment	2000		2004		2008	
Language of learning and assessment	L1	English (L3)	L1	English (L3)	L1	English (L3)
English	37.41	39.07	40.65	41.43	38.30	38.70
Mathematics	42.73	36.20	42.60	39.43	34.30	34.00
Biology	57.85	42.40	47.30	35.93	44.00	34.90
Chemistry	45.41	38.00	43.19	37.28	37.30	33.20
Physics	-	-	39.62	31.53	34.60	30.70
<b>Average %</b>	<b>45.85</b>	<b>38.92</b>	<b>42.67</b>	<b>37.12</b>	<b>37.70</b>	<b>34.30</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>+ 6.93%</b>		<b>+ 5.55%</b>		<b>+ 3.4%</b>	

Our team was further able to show that the highest performers on national assessments were those learners who had the full eight years of L1-based instruction, contrasted with those who had fewer years of L1 study (Heugh et al., 2012: pp. 245–249). Any switch to English (L3) as medium of instruction (after four or after six years of L1) did not result in improved English skills. The Ethiopian case demonstrates that where the political will is present, L1-based MLE can be implemented effectively in challenging, resource-scarce conditions, and can enhance school results for all learners (see Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012 for a detailed analysis and comparison with other country cases). Meanwhile, it may be noted that the average scores are not high overall, so there is more work to be done in improving the quality of instruction. Further, there are no scores for L1 because it was not assessed, but we could predict that the L1 scores would provide stronger evidence of differences between eight years versus four or six years of L1-based education.

## Challenges to implementation of MLE and some solutions

As discussed above, L1-based MLE can significantly improve educational access and quality for non-dominant learners in contexts with limited resources. Yet evidence from high-resource contexts, along with theories and principles from bi- and multilingual education, would suggest that educational outcomes could be even better for learners in MLE programmes. What is slowing us down?

When policymakers and practitioners mobilise resources to implement MLE in their education systems, they understandably have high expectations. We can show that MLE greatly improves things like classroom participation, learner motivation and self-esteem, and parent involvement, but with assessment scores we cannot always show large gains relative to monolingual programmes. In this section I discuss three challenges that continue to limit the great potential of MLE and our ability to demonstrate its value (for more details, see Benson, 2019). I accompany these with an exploration of what can be or has been done to address these challenges.

### The single greatest challenge: Dependence on early-exit transitional models

As already mentioned, the early-exit transitional model, like that of the CEEF experiment in Guinea-Bissau, takes a short-term approach to use of the L1 in favour of switching to use of a dominant or official language as soon as possible. This approach was promulgated in colonial times by the British in African and South Asian

contexts (Heugh, 2011), as well as in North America in the 1970s and 80s, until researchers found that the pedagogical and cognitive benefits would be much greater with continued development of the L1 (Cummins, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). The early-exit model takes a subtractive approach to language development, when we now know that higher oral and written proficiency in the L1 means higher oral and written proficiency in additional languages through a process known as transfer (Bialystok, 2001). To maximise the power of interlinguistic transfer, both or all languages must be part of a systematic programme in which oral and written skills are developed in the L1 while additional languages (L2 and/or L3) are taught by teachers proficient in those languages (Bialystok, 2007; Cummins, 2009).

There are sociocultural critiques of early-exit models as well. They are now considered short-sighted and discriminatory by many scholars, representing a language-as-problem orientation (Ruiz, 1984). They have also been criticised for prioritising dominant languages while devaluing learners' own languages and life experiences (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981), which is not productive for learning or for society as a whole. These latter arguments have not reached many African contexts, where even short-term use of the L1 has been appreciated by parents and communities. That 'feel-good' aspect is salient, because it represents such an improvement over schools that have never officially recognised the L1.

In light of current research and thinking about multilingual education, therefore, early-exit models do not spend enough time or effort on any of the components that would promote effective transfer. This means that at Grade 3, just as the curriculum focus switches from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn', learners are suddenly taught through a new language, which is challenging both cognitively and linguistically (Heugh, 2011). Even if short-term use of the L1 is clearly much better than ignoring it (Alidou & Brock-Utne, 2011), early exit explains to a great extent why teachers struggle with 'transition' to the L2 or L3, and why studies comparing MLE with non-MLE classes do not show even greater gains. The model problem is compounded by teachers' own limitations in L2 or L3 proficiency and/or teaching methods, as well as assessing learners only in those languages, as discussed next.

What can be done? Current research would support adoption of more additive, pedagogically sound approaches dedicated to L1 *maintenance and development* throughout the primary cycle, if not beyond. Stakeholders need to consider conducting pilots that expand L1 use through the five to seven years of primary schooling, and even to secondary, because greater gains are likely to be

demonstrated in terms of learner achievement (e.g. Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002 in North America; Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012 in Ethiopia). Greater gains in student achievement will help convince policymakers that true L1-based MLE, developing multiple languages and literacies, is worth the investment of resources. In the meantime, programme outcomes could be improved if the study of L1 as a language/literacy subject is extended beyond its exit as a medium of instruction, which would allow learners to further develop and maintain their L1 literacy skills, allowing more opportunities for transfer.

### **The second greatest challenge: Assessment only in dominant languages**

As mentioned above, evaluations of MLE are often designed to compare achievement of the same type of learners based on their participation in MLE ('treatment') or non-MLE ('control') classes. It is common to give the same assessment to both groups using the dominant language (an L2 or L3), since the goal is to prepare learners for study through that dominant language at some point in their education. It is reasoned that if MLE is helping the 'treatment' group, they will do better than the 'control' group. This makes comparison seem easy and straightforward – but the question is whether or not it is valid.

Assessing the control group in the dominant language makes sense because they have been taught in that language. However, MLE learners, whose instruction is based on literacy and learning in the L1, are not prepared for assessment in the dominant language until later, when they begin transferring skills from the L1. According to Cummins (2009), as discussed above, the acquisition of oral and written L2 is mediated by L1 proficiency. This means that assessing the oral and written proficiency of MLE learners in the L1 will demonstrate what they have learned that is potentially transferable, given adequate oral instruction in the new language. Assessment of literacy in the L1 will give evaluators a much clearer picture of what learners can do, and how language and literacy development are facilitated by MLE. Further, assessment of curricular content like mathematics should be done in the language of instruction, since the goal is not to test language but to see what has been learned. Studies done in Ethiopia (Heugh et al., 2012) and Cameroon (Laitin et al., 2019) suggest that comparable, valid achievement data can be efficiently generated through curriculum-based testing of MLE and non-MLE learners using the language in which they are being taught. Another option piloted in the Western Cape Province, South Africa (Mbude-Shale et al., 2004) is to use side-by-side bilingual test instruments, allowing learners to choose the language in which they respond item by item or to cross-check meanings as needed.

### **A third challenge: Aspiration for high proficiency in dominant languages**

People believe that education will offer their children proficiency in dominant languages, especially when they are not widely spoken in the home or community, and that these languages will give their children job and economic opportunities. The demand for linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) is unprecedented in today's global world among people from all socio-economic backgrounds, but especially among people from low-income contexts. At times, the overwhelming desire for a dominant language like English or French may make them forget about other important goals of education like learning to read and write, developing critical thinking and building knowledge across the curriculum.

Many believe that to learn a new language it should be used as a medium of instruction (Heugh, 2011). The underlying assumptions are that learners must give up one language to acquire another, and that they must be exposed to the new language constantly. As discussed above, neither assumption is true; investment in quality L1 instruction will pay off in effective L2 learning. Research shows that new languages can be learned well when they are studied as subjects. What is most important is the language proficiency of the teachers and the quality of instruction (Heugh, 2011). The act of calling a dominant language the medium of instruction does not make it a valid language of classroom communication, nor does it miraculously make learners fluent. For high proficiency in a new language, learners require input from highly competent speakers of that language, along with regular and sustained communicative interaction in different domains, in addition to study of linguistic features.

In most multilingual African contexts, it is simply not possible for most learners to gain high proficiency in a former colonial language. This has nothing to do with lack of ability, but rather with the lack of conditions that would support high-quality linguistic input. A more realistic goal would be *functional proficiency* in a new language. Teachers do not need to be native speakers, but they need to have an appropriate level of L2/L3 proficiency, as well as an understanding of relevant teaching methods. They can also learn to facilitate interlinguistic transfer by comparing and contrasting the new language with the L1. In sum, reasonable levels of dominant language proficiency can be expected if a systematic approach to language learning is taken and if enabling conditions are created through teacher training and curriculum development.

## Current efforts and ways forward for African contexts

There are efforts under way to address the above challenges and move MLE implementation forward in ways that can improve the quality of basic education for all learners. I discuss a few here, along with ways that they can be applied in multilingual African contexts.

### Raising international awareness of language gaps in education

From an international perspective, some of us have been working with UNESCO (Benson, 2016; Kosonen, 2017) to develop indicators that will encourage policymakers to pay attention to language issues in education. While SDG 4 unfortunately does not mention language per se, it does mention Indigeneity and vulnerability, calling attention to educational access, quality and equity for the most marginalised. In a background paper commissioned for the *2016 Global Education Monitoring Report* (Benson, 2016), I argue that a critical dimension of equity is whether or not the language(s) of instruction allows the learner to access initial and continuing literacy

as well as the full content of the curriculum. I raise a set of questions for evaluating progress in language issues in education, along with possible sources of answers, some of which are summarised in Table 3.

Based on that work, UNESCO has adopted sub-indicator 4.5.2: 'The percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction' (UIS, 2018). While collection of this data is optional, the sub-indicator is included in the UIS standardised set of metadata for each of the proposed global and thematic indicators for monitoring SDG 4 and the Education 2030 Agenda. Kosonen (2017) has since written a background paper detailing how relevant language-related data can be collected and used to monitor educational quality. He notes that the latest questionnaire used by the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) includes items FL7–FL10 related to home and school languages (UNICEF, 2017), and he suggests cross-referencing this data with classroom language mapping, a data collection strategy that has been successfully applied thus far in Vietnam and Timor-Leste (UNESCO, 2015).

**Table 3:** Questions for capturing relevant language-in-education data (adapted from Benson, 2016: pp. 16–17)

Focus	Data required	Example questions	Possible sources
National policies	Language policy	Does social policy inhibit, enable, enhance or promote rights or protections based on linguistic/cultural background?	Constitution, treaties/conventions
	Educational language policy	Which language(s) are to be used in education, how and for what purposes?	Education laws, Ministry of Education policy and curriculum
Languages in society	Linguistic/sociolinguistic	Which languages are spoken, where and by how many school-aged children?	Census, language mapping
	Orthographic, literacy-related	What proportion of speakers may be literate in each language? What writing systems are used?	Family/community language surveys
Schools and communities	Teacher language proficiencies	In which languages are teachers proficient orally and in writing?	Pre-service programmes, Ministry of Education personnel records

## Assessing L1 proficiency

As mentioned above, the assessment of oral and written L1 has been lacking in many situations where L1-based education is being implemented. The main data source for governments and development partners on literacy learning has been the EGRA, whose focus on phonemic awareness and reading speed is of questionable validity (Graham & van Ginkel, 2014) and can have negative backwash effects<sup>2</sup> on pedagogical decision making for multilingual learners (Benson, 2014). Working with a team of graduate students, Indigenous educators and NGO staff, I have been piloting a simple free writing assessment among Indigenous learners in Cambodia. Our results are forthcoming, but are already promising in terms of assessing L1 writing as it is developing, and demonstrating the benefits of L1-based versus dominant language (Khmer) instruction.

Our assessment is based on the notions that if children can write, they can read, and if they can express themselves in writing, they can comprehend what they are reading. This simple assessment goes well beyond the EGRA and does not suffer from its limitations, because if students can write their own ideas, that means they can decode and encode, and – going beyond these surface-level skills to more foundational understandings – they can begin to think for themselves.

Using a prompt in L1 (Kreung, Tampuen or Bunong) that asks Grade 2 and 3 learners to write about a dream they had one night, we assessed the 2016 and 2017 responses based on length and complexity of their written self-expression. The 2017 responses were also analysed in terms of orthographic correctness. We also assessed some Grade 3 learners in Khmer, including both L1 and non-L1 classes.

From the complexity of their writing, we were able to make a number of observations, including the following.

1. Most children taught in the L1 were able to write multiple sentences about their own experiences, and many of them were also able to write in Khmer, while their peers in non-L1 classes could only write single words. (Where two Grade 2 classes could not write in the L1, it was clear that there were issues with their instruction.)
2. Children who wrote relatively well in the L1 also wrote relatively well in Khmer.

From the orthographic error analysis, we were also able to show that different languages call for different approaches to literacy instruction, and that stronger L1 literacy is needed for effective transfer to Khmer literacy.

Overall, the assessment of L1 writing through a simple prompt for self-expression offers a significant source of data on teaching and learning. We also found evidence based on teachers' comments that the assessment created a positive backwash effect. As opposed to the negative backwash effect of EGRA, wherein teachers think children need to learn to read quickly, our assessment helped teachers realise that they should work with learners on productive skills like writing for communication and self-expression. The implications of our pilot assessments for African contexts are that teachers can learn to teach and assess important skills in the L1, and that these assessments can provide useful documentation of learners' progress in L1 literacy and the development of skills that are transferable to additional languages.

## Multilingualism for all

L1-based MLE should work for everyone, not only those from non-dominant groups. MLE is arguably relevant for all learners in the 21st century, since those with oral and written proficiencies in multiple languages will be best able to link local and regional to international domains in this rapidly globalising world (Benson & Elorza, 2015). The European concept of plurilingualism, or the development of communicative competence in multiple languages over one's lifetime according to one's needs (Council of Europe, 2006, 2007), is highly relevant to multilingual Africans. The task of education is to expand that communicative competence to include multiple literacies.

It should be noted that pluri-/multilingual individuals do not use all of their languages for the same functions, but select from their repertoires and switch between languages in a dynamic process according to their communicative needs (Herdina & Jessner, 2002). This means that their proficiency in each language develops and changes as a reflection of need. If all primary schools gave learners a strong foundation in their L1s and an introduction to additional languages, combined with critical thinking skills and strategies to promote interlinguistic transfer, they would be serving those learners' current and future needs. Continuing forms of education could then help learners to maintain and develop the languages in their repertoires.

One strategy being used in the US to encourage learners to maintain their home languages while developing skills in dominant language English is to offer a Seal of Biliteracy, as many states and school districts are now doing. Due to the decentralised nature of the education system, the criteria for awarding a

2. Backwash is the influence an examination or assessment has on the teaching and learning which precedes it. For example, EGRA's 'words read correctly per minute' metric seems to be causing teachers to force children to read quickly, which has no pedagogical justification.

Seal of Biliteracy differ depending on what courses and levels of proficiency are offered, but the idea is to reward secondary school graduates for achieving a functional level of spoken and written proficiency in each of two languages. Interestingly, according to an official website,<sup>3</sup> the level of proficiency is not necessarily identical for both languages, which is consistent with the point made by Herdina and Jessner (2002) about developing languages according to one's needs. According to informal communication I have had with implementers of the Seal of Biliteracy in Albuquerque, New Mexico,<sup>4</sup> youth and their families are so proud of their seals that they are influencing younger children to maintain and develop their L1s, even calling for L1-based instruction.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I have described the state of research and practice in L1-based multilingual education with a focus on multilingual African contexts, demonstrating how important an investment in the L1 is for access, quality and equity in education. Having reviewed some of the challenges to MLE implementation, I have discussed efforts to address those challenges, and taken inspiration from some recent projects that show us ways forward. Developing literacy skills in multiple languages while building on learners' own languages should be the aim of all education programmes in African countries and beyond. Based on the research evidence, we would call for long-term, high-quality instruction in the L1 that develops oral and written as well as analytical skills, with the aim of building a strong foundation for literacy and skills transfer to additional languages, which should be taught by teachers who are proficient in those languages. This requires a better understanding on the part of everyone from governments to communities that the learner's L1 holds the key to effective learning of literacy, curricular content and additional languages. This is the lesson we need to apply throughout the continent, to promote and expand on African learners' existing multilingualism.

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3. See the Seal of Biliteracy website: <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/content/who-qualifies-seal-biliteracy>  
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### 3. Globalisation and curriculum in African classrooms: Is there space for the local?

Barbara Trudell

#### Abstract

This chapter argues that the impact of globalisation on education is not at all uniform across the world. Unlike its impact in the Global North, the uptake of globalised curriculum in states of the Global South leads to learning outcomes in which local knowledge is undervalued and ignored. External elements are adopted into the national curriculum, despite their being inconsistent with local practice, context, requirements and cost structures. Globalised curriculum can be appropriated by local stakeholders, and examples exist of truly locally owned curriculum. However, such programmes are greatly in need of strong, sustained institutional support – financial, curricular and policy-based – as they contest the globalised formal curriculum.

#### Introduction

The notions of 'global' and 'local' are central to current discussions of international education and development. The actual distinction between them is not so noticeable in the formal education context of the Global North, because so much of 'global' curriculum parallels the local knowledge of Northern societies, universalised to the rest of the world. However, in the nation-states of the Global South, particularly among the non-elite populations, local knowledge is generally not found in the global curriculum being promoted and assumed in the formal education context. In these situations, the inclusion or exclusion of local knowledge and values reflects the degree to which national curriculum is responding more to the realities of its citizens, or to the realities of so-called 'global society'.

The concern for inclusion of local features in national curriculum is also related to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), i.e. to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. These stated aspirations prompt several questions.

- Can education be 'inclusive' if it ignores local knowledge and knowledge needs?
- Can education be 'quality' if it ignores local context?
- And how is lifelong learning even possible, if locally relevant language and knowledge are not included?

The answers to these questions indicate that the success of implementing SDG 4 will require recognition and inclusion of local knowledge, values and language in national curriculum.

In this chapter, I consider the impact of globalisation on curriculum at the local level and what is driving this. I explore the apparent paradox that the global curriculum, as adopted in the formal structure of education, actually results in a diversity of outcomes in practice, due to the decoupling of institutional practice from policy. I then examine the factors that lead countries to adopt the global curriculum as well as those factors that obstruct local ownership of curriculum. I present six successful examples of local appropriation of curriculum in more detail, and argue that institutional support is critical to address the current lack of sustainability of these initiatives.

#### Globalisation and its impact on education in the Global South: The drive for uniformity

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) have observed that, in general, the impact of globalisation on formal education has been to define educational values in economic terms, and to see education as a private good rather than a social or community good. An emphasis on the English language is also a common feature (Babaci-Wilhite et al., 2015). The role of curriculum and pedagogy is to reproduce these values; as a result, educational policies – including those governing curriculum design – are 'driven more by the values of the [global] market and system efficiency than by cultural and community values' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: p. 116).

The impact of globalisation on curriculum is clearly seen in classrooms of the Global South. Carnoy and Rhoten have argued that '[g]lobalisation is a force reorganising the world's economy, and the main resources for that are increasingly knowledge and information' (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002: pp. 1–2). This focus on knowledge and information resources (particularly those of the Global North) has significant implications for formal education, as the primary environment in which such knowledge and information are disseminated.

The impact of globalisation on education systems around the world has been to facilitate uniformity. Common assumptions about the number of grade levels necessary and the classroom environment that is most appropriate are accompanied by assumptions about proper curricular content, i.e. 'what people should know'. The standard academic curriculum is assumed to include Western science concepts, mathematics, language arts (in an international language, often English), world geography and the ability to read. However, in classrooms of the Global South, the knowledge possessed by the local community is considered irrelevant and essentially useless to the learner's formal educational experience. Ironically, the 'academic achievement' that is considered so essential to the nation's progress includes little or nothing of the knowledge that the nation's communities possess.

Baker refers to this knowledge as 'academic intelligence', a distinct type of intelligence that 'has become valued as the central human capacity of the schooled society' (Baker, 2014: p. 42). Academic intelligence includes such skills as higher-order reasoning, abstraction, interpretive skills and critique. Values such as moral character, working hard and specialised knowledge are seen as irrelevant to this human capacity.

Baker argues that academic intelligence is now shaping our ideas about what human intelligence is, and that this sort of intelligence has become an objective in itself. A person's intelligence is now largely publicly judged by means of indicators of his or her schooling performance. Furthermore:

*The effect of [this approach to intelligence] is so extensive that when qualities that are less related to cognitive ability are used to make education decisions about students, [e.g. social skills, the arts, emotional intelligence], it becomes publicly controversial, litigious and ultimately taboo.*

#### **Baker (2014: p. 51)**

It can easily be argued that local knowledge and language fall neatly into the 'controversial' and 'taboo' category that Baker mentions above.

Another feature of the drive for uniformity that characterises the globalisation of education is the phenomenon of international assessments, highly popular in education circles of the Global North and making their way into nations of the South as well. A few of the best-known international assessments include:

- the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), developed by the Amsterdam-based

International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Its developers say 'PIRLS is recognised as the global standard for assessing trends in reading achievement at the fourth grade' (i.e. the fourth year of schooling).<sup>1</sup> PIRLS has been administered in more than 50 countries, two of them in Sub-Saharan Africa: South Africa and Botswana

- the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), also developed by the IEA. This assessment is administered worldwide in Grades 4 and 8. The 2015 TIMSS was administered in approximately 60 countries, the two Sub-Saharan African nations once again being South Africa and Botswana
- the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Developed and administered by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), PISA is an assessment of mathematics, science and reading, administered to 15-year-olds. The 2015 PISA was administered in all 35 OECD countries, as well as nearly 40 other countries. In Africa, only Tunisia participated in the assessment, though numerous Latin American and Southeast Asian nations participated.<sup>2</sup>

Participation in these assessments by countries of the Global South is encouraged by international education donors. Lockheed (2013) notes that participation in international assessments is often a *quid pro quo* for international donor support for a country's education sector, driven by donor concerns for results and accountability. In addition, Lockheed (2013) notes cross-country studies such as these require data on many countries to be useful to the participants; the only way to expand the number of countries in the dataset has been to add the low- and middle-income countries.

Yet the appropriateness of these assessments for low- to middle-income nations is doubtful; indeed, the assessments are not designed for them, and performance in these socio-educational contexts is not in focus. Hence, results for low- to middle-income nations can be both discouraging and inaccurate, such as 'the nearly 82% of students tested in Peru whose PISA scores fell below 400 points and were considered "illiterate"' (Lockheed, 2013: p. 172). Given these kinds of globally reported results, the withdrawal of some nations from such assessments is hardly surprising.

1. See <https://www.iea.nl/iea/pirls>

2. See <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/>

## Globalisation of education in the Global South: Diversity of outcomes

Paradoxically, however, the drive for uniformity in education has led to very diverse outcomes in education systems across the globe. Assessing globalisation generally, Rizvi and Lingard note that:

*While hegemonic neoliberal globalisation has greatly benefited some countries and groups of people, it has had disastrous consequences for others, whose economic prospects have declined and whose cultural traditions have eroded.*

**Rizvi & Lingard (2010: p. 92)**

They further observe:

*Nor are the cultural traditions of communities equally respected within the global space, which has enabled a range of exploitative practices to flourish.*

**Rizvi & Lingard (2010: p. 92)**

For communities of the Global South, this diversity of outcomes is partly due to a non-uniform uptake of the 'ideal' global education system. Where globalisation influences education systems in the Global South, the institutional result often tends towards what Meyer and Rowan (1977) refer to as 'decoupling': the separation of formal structure from actual organisational practice. Meyer (Krücken & Drori, 2009: p. 182) observes that decoupling in education systems of the Global South 'is endemic because nation-states are modelled on an external culture that cannot simply be imported wholesale as a fully functioning system'. As a result, many external elements are adopted despite being inconsistent with local practice, context, requirements and cost structures. The result is an eclectic adoption of the various principles of education, which may conflict with each other and with local practice.

In addition, the context of globalisation opens space for significant outside influence on national education systems – the type of influence (including language of instruction, among other curricular features) depending on who it is that is influencing those systems. Takyi-Amoako (2012) argues that international education donors in Ghana, acting as agents of globalisation, have had a disproportionate influence on national education policy and strategy. In a 2011 study of globalisation and education in Oman, Al'Abri (2011) observes that the environment of globalisation has allowed international organisations to impose their policy interests and education discourse on the education systems and policies of recipient nations, including (in Oman) an emphasis on English-medium instruction.

So the impact of globalisation on education in the Global South is in one sense uniform, since it drives towards uniformity of curriculum; but it is at the same time diverse, depending on the degree to it is taken up and the nature of the influence wielded by international agencies in its implementation.

## The global and the local in education curriculum

Given its evident inequalities, as well as the inadequacy of a globalised curriculum for serving citizens of the Global South, one might ask why nation-states of the South accept the globalised education model. Krücken and Drori (2009: p. 186) argue that resistance to world models in general is difficult because nation-states are formally committed, as a matter of identity, to such 'self-evident' goals as socio-economic development, citizen rights, individual self-development and civil international relations. World pressures towards the standardisation of nation-states and education homogeneity are difficult for nations of the South to refuse. Verger et al. (2012: p. 11) agree, observing that nation-states expand schooling as part of a broader process of adhering to world models of 'the modern state'.

There is also the fact that globalised curriculum is not such a challenge for children of the ruling elites, since they are more likely to have gained globally recognised knowledge such as literacy, international language fluency, digital technology and so on. However, the impact of this curriculum on more rural, less affluent communities is significant and negative. Most learners in African classrooms experience very different life realities from learners in classrooms of the Global North or their counterparts in the Southern elite. In addition, African learners themselves also vary tremendously in terms of their language fluency, knowledge, life experience and expectations. By neglecting to make space for those differences, globalised curriculum does not attend to the linguistic and cultural features that would characterise quality, equitable education for all learners.

Local ownership of education would seem to be a solution to this inequality in curriculum. Maeda (2015) observes that international education donors and implementing agencies often promote the notion of family and community involvement in education as 'actors'. However, the reality is that local participation in education is generally limited to contributions for school buildings, paying teachers and labour. The decentralisation and 'local ownership' of education provision has not generally meant community influence on curriculum, and the professional educators involved are seldom ready to

cede authority or decision-making power to parents and community members. Maeda notes that, as a result, family and community members may not even consider having a connection with schools, due to a mismatch between their sense of what is worth knowing and that of the school (Maeda, 2015). Here, McEwan's comments on 'partnership' between agencies and communities are relevant:

*The language of partnership is thus a means by which development agencies attempt to counter accusations of neo-colonialism [...] but whose development policies are still problematically defined by similar relationships of power. [...] Agency still resides in the North.*

McEwan (2009: pp. 221, 223)

## Can globalised curriculum be appropriated by local stakeholders?

The grim picture of globalised curriculum as applied to local classrooms is not itself universal, however. In communities across the African continent, examples can be found of local appropriation and modification of global curriculum. A few of these examples are described here. (Note: The dates during which they were seen to function are reported below, since their sustainability has not been ensured.)

### Burkina Faso, 2010

#### Centres à passerelle (Trudell, 2012)

Burkina Faso's *centres à passerelle* (called 'speed schools' in English) aim at providing classroom-based learning, using local languages as the medium of instruction, for out-of-school children who are too old to enrol in the formal primary school (usually nine to 12 years old). The programme is nine months long, and focuses on teaching the pupils essential skills in reading, maths and French. Graduates of the programme then take entrance examinations at the local primary schools, and are generally able to enter those schools at Grade 4. As of 2010, six Burkinabè NGOs were running *centres à passerelle*, funded by the Norway-based Strømme Foundation. Classrooms are provided by the local community, with teachers and materials provided by the donor and implementing NGOs.

The curriculum used is based on the national curriculum for Grades 1–3, but it is also based on the question: 'What knowledge do these children need most, and how can we deliver it?' Parents are enthusiastic about the programme; they even occasionally attempt to send children younger than the programme age limit, a practice which is actively opposed by the local primary school leadership.

#### Écoles communautaires (Trudell, 2012)

These schools represent a non-formal education alternative to formal schools in communities where there is no government school. The schools are sponsored by the Fondation pour le Développement Communautaire/Burkina Faso (FDC/BF, Foundation for Community Development), formerly linked to Save the Children USA. The four-year curriculum aims to 'provide basic education to the greatest number of children' aged nine to 14, through the use of the local language as medium of instruction and focused attention on reading, maths and oral French language acquisition. The schools are run by community-staffed school management committees, and teachers are financially supported by the community. Up to 30 per cent of the graduates of these community schools enter the government schools at Grades 5 or 6.

#### Some thoughts on these two programmes

These two non-formal programmes are similar in several ways. They operate with material support and backing from the parents; they target older, out-of-school children; they capitalise on the pupil's fluency in the local language, using it as the medium of instruction; and they aim at placing their pupils into higher grades in the formal school system. The second and third of these features set these schools apart most clearly from the formal schools, and are likely the most relevant to the success of the schools. These two programmes have found a way for excluded populations to access the formal education system after all. Ironically, their unorthodox approach to mastery of the curriculum subjects allows them to enter the world of globalised curriculum with some hope of success.

### Senegal, 2007

#### Jola Kwatay language (Trudell & Klaas, 2010; Trudell, 2008)

The Jola Kwatay language community is a small group, approximately 3,000 in number, located in the far southwest corner of Senegal (with an additional 2,000 speakers elsewhere in the region). A non-formal adult literacy programme in the language was organised by local churches in the 1990s, but local interest was limited. In 2002, two teachers in the only primary school in the area began to repurpose the Kwatay adult literacy materials for use in their classrooms. By 2007, literacy and mathematics were being taught in Kwatay language in the first two grades, with a gradual transition into French by Year 3; in the later grades, oral Kwatay remained in use to help explain difficult concepts.

This small programme was very well received, and, by 2007, the national government had adopted it as one of its experimental bilingual education programmes. Local support for it was captured in the remark of one of the teachers that 'the ancestors like this programme', because it gave such high status to the local language and culture (Trudell, 2008: p. 400).

### **Saafi language (Trudell & Klaas, 2010; Trudell, 2008)**

The Saafi language association ADLAS (Association pour le développement de la langue saafi or Association for the Development of the Saafi Language) began Saafi language adult literacy classes in the early 2000s. The Saafi literacy office was called *Kiyaa-ki* (basket of treasure), referring to keeping the language so that it would not be lost. The adult literacy learners' desire to give their children the chance to learn to read as easily as they themselves did led to the establishment of a preschool, where pupils were taught a bit of French, using Saafi as the medium of instruction. In addition, Saafi language literacy classes were offered to upper primary students in the government school, on a non-formal basis, after school hours. Eventually, a Saafi language bilingual primary school initiative began, but it could not be administratively sustained for very long.

#### **Some thoughts on these two programmes**

These two programmes both began as non-formal adult literacy programmes, which later moved into the formal education system. They highlight the fact that when adults learn to read in their own language, they often want similar learning opportunities for their children which the formal curriculum does not provide. This approach generates locally relevant curriculum choices, as parents realise the value of local language-mediated alternatives for learning. The two programmes also illustrate the power of local activism and engagement by members of the local community.

### **Kenya, 2012 and 2013**

#### **Maasai language (Trudell, 2013)**

In 2011, a local language early grade reading programme called Opportunity Schools was begun in 20 of the poorest-performing primary schools in the Maasai area of Kenya. However, in the early stages of programme development, it became clear that the current Maasai orthography is so difficult to read (due to its under-representation of vowel sounds and tone) that mother-tongue Maasai speakers do not purchase or read the available written materials in the language.

To address this problem, well-known Maasai writers and leaders were engaged in a discussion about making the writing system easier to read. Freely admitting the extreme difficulty of reading with the current orthography, these leaders gave permission for the discussion of possible alternatives. Subsequently, Maasai linguists and education staff from NGOs and the Ministry of Education's Department of Adult and Continuing Education determined that two tone markings could be added to the Maasai orthography used in the Opportunity Schools programme: the acute accent ['] for high tone, and the circumflex [^] for falling tone. Other suggestions such as non-Latin characters and additional diacritics were ruled out.

Though this ruling was not the 'ideal' option desired by linguists in the language, the programme materials were printed using the two tone marks. Results were impressive. Teachers reported their pupils learning to read Maasai in a fraction of the time expected, due to the disambiguation provided by the two tone marks.

#### **Community-based literature development (Trudell & Ndunde, 2015)**

In 2013 World Vision contracted SIL Africa to implement its community-based literature development (CBLD) programme in one of their Kikamba-speaking programme areas of Kenya. The CBLD programme combines highly local development of levelled readers (including choice of story themes, original authorship and control over the illustrations) with careful editing and printing. The resulting books are of a quality that could be sold in national bookshops, yet they bear the names and the knowledge of local citizens of the local community. Sixty such stories, in 38 volumes, were developed and distributed for use in the Literacy Boost reading camps and clubs in the Ukambani region, run by World Vision Kenya in conjunction with Save the Children. A number of the titles also made their way into formal classrooms in the area, even up to Grades 5 and 6.

The positive responses of teachers and parents to these books were surprisingly strong, indicating their belief that the local knowledge expressed in the stories, in Kikamba, represented the successful entry of community knowledge and instruction into the formal primary curriculum. As one parent noted: 'Foreign material is good as additional material, but it is not all our children need to know' (Trudell & Ndunde, 2015: p. 15).

#### **Some thoughts on these two programmes**

These two examples demonstrate the possibility of successful engagement by a local community in what and how their children will learn in the formal classroom. The content of the CBLD books indicated the local curriculum (i.e. 'this is what we think our children should know'), while the highly political issue of writing system design was tackled in such a way that local children's learning was enhanced. The two examples also indicate that ownership of written text has a strong link to perceptions about engagement with formal education, as well as to the likelihood of pupil success in this globally shaped, linguistically foreign curriculum.

At the same time, 'community-owned' decisions on curriculum issues can be difficult to achieve, and equally difficult to identify. As Ager has noted, the notion of 'language community' (2001: p. 159) is highly amorphous when it comes to decisions on language practice. The power of such communities, and the power of their joint decisions, is generally found in their face-to-face engagement on the issues at hand, not on any conceptual level of 'community ownership' or 'input'.

## Conclusion

In examining these six examples of local engagement with, and appropriation of, globalised formal curriculum, one especially sobering fact emerges: their brief lifetime and lack of sustainability. Examples like these are often relatively short-lived, perhaps five to 15 years long, primarily because these initiatives lack adequate, sustained institutional support – whether financial, curricular or policy-based. This lack of institutional support stands to reason, since each example is in its own way contesting the formal curriculum, an extremely powerful agent of globalisation.

That is why support from government and/or NGO institutions is so critical to the sustainability of such programmes. These power brokers can either support contextualised curriculum choices that can lead to greater inclusion and equity, such as those described above, or they can insist on curricular choices that are more in line with global linguistic, cultural and pedagogical interests than those of the learners and their communities. In the face of globalised curriculum, the real national curriculum challenge is to *support equitable learning for all*, integrating local linguistic and cultural context into national education systems so that local knowledge and cultural capital are recognised and utilised to build the nation.

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## 4. Southern multilingualisms, translanguaging and transknowledging in inclusive and sustainable education

*Kathleen Heugh*

### Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to reclaim African (and southern) understandings of multilingualism as essential for inclusive and sustainable 21st-century education. It is to emphasise, as have other authors (e.g. Franceschini, 2013; Shoba & Chimbutane, 2013), that a recent renewal of interest in multilingualism in Europe or North America is no reason to ignore centuries of African or southern experiences or scholarship in this field. The languages used in most classroom settings, whether these are in urban, rural or remote locations, always include a complex set of well-researched code-mixing, code-switching, translation and interpreting practices. Some scholars now refer to these practices as falling under an umbrella term, 'translanguaging', as regular features of multilingual practices in schools. This is even when one language is designated the only language for teaching and learning.

The recent portrayal of multilingualism in education as understood and researched in Europe and North America is by no means in advance of or superior to a long lineage of African scholarship, research and practice. In the interests of historical accuracy and inclusive and equitable education in postcolonial countries – whether in Africa, Asia or the Pacific – it is important to clarify some contradictory discussions about the relationship between code-switching, translanguaging and multilingualism in education.

While there are at least three different views of translanguaging, two of these are relevant to or in the best interests of student learning in Africa or other postcolonial contexts. Unintentionally, one of these can delay student access to the language capabilities needed for equitable and inclusive participation as citizens beyond school. The purpose here is to situate translanguaging within a broad field of multilingualism in education, drawing attention to the process of the fundamental role of knowledge exchange ('transknowledging') in education. Education is about conveying knowledge of the world through language in ways that are meaningful for students, and that will open doors for their lives beyond school. In a world of increased mobility, understanding the role of multilingualism to facilitate optimal exchange of knowledges among students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is a key characteristic for inclusive and sustainable 21st-century education.

### Introduction

In this chapter, I draw attention to three considerations of diversity, particularly in relation to multilingualism as they impact on inclusive, quality and sustainable education for students in postcolonial or 'southern' contexts. These considerations have implications for students in all countries of the world where diversity features prominently.

The first consideration is that increasing human mobility as a result of choice or conflict brings challenges for education systems that are not designed to embrace diversity. Contemporary diversity has many dimensions. For example, mobile communities bring different systems of knowledge, belief and language when they relocate. When they move, the education systems which they find are seldom ready to adapt to include new cohorts of students, especially when they bring new ways of understanding and knowing the world (epistemology), and different systems of belief. The receiving systems are not ready to adapt and modify mainstream curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, or to do this together with changes to the languages used in teaching and learning. In this chapter, attention is drawn to students' linguistic and knowledge diversities as essential considerations in the provision of education if we are to achieve both inclusive and sustainable education that builds on the knowledge systems of all students. This is especially important for cohorts of students whose parents and grandparents have found themselves 'pushed out' from school education (Mohanty, 2018) either as a result of human conflict and displacement or through a mismatch between their home, local or regional languages and the language used in the schooling system.

The second consideration is that because multilingualism is heterogeneous rather than a singular phenomenon, it may be useful to understand the plurality of multilingualism(s), particularly in the contexts of southern countries. In other words, the different histories, linguistic ecologies and socio-political economies of diverse communities result in different multilingualisms as they evolve, for example, in Delhi, Dili, Dhaka, Jakarta, Kigali, Kinshasa, Rio de Janeiro, Singapore or Quito (e.g. Heugh, 2017, 2018). Multilingualism in such settings appears daily for the purposes of informal communication in order to achieve social cohesion and to promote egalitarian inclusivity. This informal use of multilingualism, including code-mixing, code-switching and the use

interpreting or ‘language brokers’, is referred to here as horizontal multilingualism. However, multilingualism is not always used for cohesive or egalitarian purposes. It is often also used to signify hierarchies of power, privilege, limited access and exclusion. While people in postcolonial societies recognise and understand that horizontal multilingualism includes language practices that bridge divides, education systems inherited from former colonial systems, until recently, have rejected or stigmatised horizontal practices of code-mixing and code-switching (bridging and linguistic fluidity) as unacceptable or illegitimate in formal education. This has resulted in pedagogies that focus on differences between and separation of languages. The focus on difference and stigmatisation of bridging practices such as code-mixing and code-switching, particularly in reading and writing, makes access to high-level ‘standard’ languages of prestige difficult. This is exacerbated through high-stakes assessment and gatekeeping mechanisms that block access to higher education and jobs in the formal economy. Language is therefore used to block access and it reinforces hierarchical and vertical forms of socio-economic and educational exclusion to opportunities beyond schooling.

The third consideration is that recent debates of multilingualism in education include discussions of how horizontal practices of code-mixing, code-switching and translanguaging can be used to reduce sociolinguistic inequities in classrooms, facilitate student voice and agency, and prepare students for sustainable futures (e.g. Lin, 2013; Van Avermaet et al., 2018). However, African research also shows that these practices do not necessarily lead to successful outcomes and social justice unless students are given access to and develop their repertoires in both horizontal and vertical dimensions of multilingualism and also in both spoken and written modes (e.g. Heugh, 2002, 2015; Ouane & Glanz, 2011).

The purpose in this chapter, considering the three issues identified above, is to remind educators and scholars in postcolonial contexts, particularly in Africa and South and Southeast Asia, that multilingualism has always been present in their education systems whether explicitly acknowledged or not. It is also to recall long histories of education where people have developed ways of passing on and expanding knowledge from one generation to the next. This includes systems of belief and/or Indigenous knowledge systems. However, in the excitement of newly recognised multilingualism in Europe and North America, southern and postcolonial expertise in multilingualisms and how they are used for disseminating and exchanging knowledge may be eclipsed by newly found theories, or a ‘re-branding’ of well-known theories and pedagogies with new names (Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019), by some northern scholars.

For this reason, we need to remind ourselves that contemporary debates and responses to newly found northern multilingualism(s) are not necessarily superior to or transferable to educational settings in the Global South. Instead, there are sound arguments about why southern educators and scholars have considerable expertise of multilingualisms in education that can inform and enrich northern understandings of these phenomena.

This chapter begins with a contextualisation of diversity in education. I go on to explain that diversity should take account of not just language but knowledge systems as well, and that western concepts are not always well equipped to do so. The next section explains why separating languages from each other is not effective in multilingual contexts and defines four key conditions for successful use of multilingual practices in education. Next, I describe African research on the dynamics of multilingual practices in society and in school settings, including ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ code-switching. I then go on to discuss three different uses of the term translanguaging, which is key for understanding differences in discourse between northern and southern scholars, and argue it can be a useful term to promote purposeful code-switching in both spoken and written teaching, learning and assessment. I then go on to describe ‘transknowledging’ and its place alongside horizontal and vertical code-switching to achieve functional multilingualism. Finally, I set out my concluding remarks and argue that the principles discussed form the basis of multilingualism for the 21st century benefiting students in all contexts.

## Contextualising heterogeneity and diversity

The history of multilingualisms in the former European colonies, also called ‘southern’ countries, has been documented in several volumes (e.g. Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010; Benson & Kosonen, 2013; Shoba & Chimbutane, 2013). It is a history in which there have been many different periods of educational practices, each of which has been characterised by multilingualism, either explicitly or implicitly. Education, however, has never been simply about language. It has always been about ensuring that knowledge is passed from one generation to the next and expanded in the process. This includes knowledge developed in languages used in different communities and parts of the world. It includes history, cultural and faith-based practices, justice and law, mathematics, and science.

The recent recovery and recognition of multilingualism by northern-oriented scholars is being understood as reflected in descriptions such as ‘multilingualism is the new linguistic dispensation’ (Singleton et al., 2013) or that we are witnessing a ‘multilingual turn’ (May, 2013).

These descriptions are accompanied by a realisation that northern education systems are under considerable strain, especially after large-scale in-migration of refugees from North Africa and the Middle East to Europe in 2015. At first sight, these reflect a mismatch between the use of a national language as the medium of instruction and the changing profile of students who come from many different language, faith-based and cultural backgrounds. Such realities have shifted attention towards linguistic diversity in education (e.g. Van Avermaet et al., 2018) to the point that insufficient attention is paid to fundamental differences of faith, culture and knowledge systems, all of which become (conveniently) subsumed under or hidden by differences that relate to language.

Understanding and working out how to manage rather than mismanage multilingualism has a longer history in postcolonial (southern) societies. Partly this is because 96 per cent of the languages of the world originate outside of Europe and North America. Africa (30 per cent), Asia (32 per cent) and the Pacific (18.5 per cent) are home to 80.5 per cent of the world's languages (Eberhard et al., 2020). Owing to the number of language communities and degree of societal multilingualism, it is not surprising that in Africa, South and Southeast Asia, for example, there is a rich legacy of scholarship and recognition that multilingualism comes in many different forms, ecologies and hierarchies that change over time. It is easy to recognise that multilingualism, for example in one part of Africa, is not the same as in another, or that multilingualism in Dakar is not the same as multilingualism in Dhaka or Delhi. Given the different scales, histories and complexities, it is therefore difficult and unwise to offer a definition of multilingualism in one setting as if it would hold true in another. What one can say is that multilingualism and multilingual practices of people in Kinshasa are unlikely to resemble multilingualism and practices in London or Washington DC.

With the re-awakening of people in 'North Atlantic' countries<sup>1</sup> to multilingualism, there is a growing body of literature that optimistically offers explanations and definitions of multilingualism and how certain practices of multilingualism in education contribute to or achieve social justice (e.g. Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García & Wei, 2014). There is an urgency in this literature, particularly in response to an increase of inward flows of refugees during the first two decades of the 21st century. However, this does not yet have the advantage of centuries of multilingual education or the last 120

years of African research on multilingualism in school education. The history of multilingualisms in education, evident in faith-based institutions in Africa (including 13th- to 19th-century university mosques of the Maghreb and Sahel, e.g. Heugh, 2017), as noted in Jakarta by Stamford Raffles in 1817 (Coleman, 2017), or in (post-)colonial education, shows the variability and multidimensionality of multilingualisms. They can, and are, used to exclude<sup>2</sup> and to include people (see also Obanya, 1999; Bamgbose, 2000; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). For this reason, it is wise to be cautious and consider how and under which circumstances multilingualism can be used to include students and ensure safe passage to future participatory citizenship and prosperity and which will curtail future options to poverty.

## Diversity is more than languages

While linguistic diversity or multilingualism has been a matter of considerable debate in southern as well as northern contexts, additional considerations that relate to diversity are less well known or discussed, and these are important for inclusive and quality education. For example, there are historical and geographical differences in understanding the role of knowledge (epistemology), belief or faith (cosmology) and being (ontology).<sup>3</sup> Debates on linguistic and sometimes also on 'cultural' diversity do not necessarily include close attention to how different systems of knowledge, faith and being might contribute to educational curricula, or, if they do, this is often overlooked in policy and planning requirements. If education were inclusive, then it would ensure that the systems of knowledge that students bring to school are included in the curriculum in ways that bring balance to hegemonic 'northern' or 'western' epistemologies. Whereas a secular approach to the curriculum has been adopted in northern settings since the second half of the 20th century, this may not suit southern communities where systems of belief or faith are regarded as integral to community well-being.

A related feature is that whereas individualism has been a dominant feature of colonial and postcolonial education systems, this is often in conflict with communal relationships in southern communities. These relationships often include close connections among people, place, ancestors and even animals. Curricula that are framed within the western concept of individualism therefore do not sit easily alongside fundamentally different experiences of communalit

1. 'North Atlantic countries' is a term used by Connell (2007) and subsequently by several scholars of decoloniality and 'southern theory' across Africa and Australasia to refer to North America and Western Europe.
2. For example, apartheid language education policy supported multilingual education as a means to segregate people and to provide unequal opportunities beyond school.
3. In this chapter, I refer to a triangular relationship and balance among epistemology, cosmology and ontology as central to many communities that affiliate with Indigenous knowledge systems. The triangular balance is necessary for communality, care of people and all living beings (including ancestors past and present) and the environment (custodianship of land/country/place). This triangular balance is often regarded as necessary for ethical and healthy communities and the places they inhabit or regard as sacred (see Heugh, 2017).

For these reasons, discussions that focus mostly on language and practices of multilingualism may be read or understood at different levels. At first sight this may be assumed to be about language and communication, and an assumed one-directional flow of information from northern epistemologies, systems of belief and understanding of the world to communities of the south. But for people in southern settings, discussion of multilingualisms may be a proxy for matters of language, knowledge, belief and being, which differ in fundamental ways from northern perspectives. Discussions of multilingualism, where they remain rooted in northern ways of thinking and doing, may run the risk of disconnecting from one of the most important purposes of education, which is a two-way sharing and expanding of knowledge. This is necessary so that students can make best use of reciprocally generated and integrated community or Indigenous knowledge systems and the school curriculum in their future lives. Multilingual education, as discussed here, is therefore more than about language and the communicative functions of language, it is also about how best to translate, share and exchange knowledge, or to 'transknowledge', in a reciprocal manner among local, regional, national and even international communities.

## Multilingualisms and heterogeneity in African research

Since political independence from Europe in the 1960s, postcolonial education systems in Africa have been characterised by attempts to implement curricula and approaches to language learning based on European and or North American theories and pedagogies. Mostly, they have been characterised by attempts to implement English-/French-/Portuguese-only medium education. Beneath the surface of such postcolonial systems, the strong current of local language practices, bilingualism and multilingualism cannot be ignored. Seasoned educators know that, in every school, teachers will prepare and practise one or two lessons that can be performed in the requisite 'official' language of the school in front of inspectors, evaluators, consultants or other visitors, whether given pre-warning of the impending visit or not. Seasoned evaluators who remain in schools and classrooms in any rural, village or small urban setting for longer than a day will quickly find that classroom discourse, by necessity, reverts to local language use, and bilingual or multilingual practices that teachers and students usually refer to as code-switching or language mixing. Linguists may also

4. Several years ago, a colleague, Naledi Mbude-Shale, at the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa, found, during classroom observations of teachers studying an Advanced Certificate in Multilingual Education at the University of Cape Town, that teachers who were confident in the subject matter were best able to explain complicated mathematical and scientific concepts in the local and regional languages. However, teachers who themselves did not understand the curriculum resorted to spoken text in wooden English, knowing that students would not try to interrupt and ask for clarifications in English (personal communication, 2000). Mbude-Shale, not wishing to publish a deficit framing of teachers, has detailed their difficulties in her MA thesis (2013), available in PDF format online at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/145042898.pdf>
5. Whitehead (2011) makes a strong case for such counter-hegemonic practices to be used in the teaching of English in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo.

recognise processes of interpreting and translation. Often, these also feature in urban and metropolitan classrooms (e.g. Heugh, 2011; Ouane & Glanz, 2011).

This happens for several reasons. The first is that most often teachers are not sufficiently comfortable with the official language of the school and they feel more confident teaching using a pedagogy in which they code-mix, code-switch and employ other bi-/multilingual approaches. The second reason is that teachers know that they need to make the content of learning meaningful for their students, and so they use these pedagogical practices to maximise opportunities for student learning.<sup>4</sup> What is actually happening is that teachers work with the bilingual or multilingual reality of their students, but this is a covert practice in which their peers and senior school management are complicit. Teachers, senior staff, students and parents usually regard this as illicit because it is frowned upon and stigmatised by educational authorities.

For this reason, it is commonplace for teachers to engage in practices of language mixing or code-switching that leave no written trace. In other words, they employ these practices in spoken form rather than written form, since this leaves no written evidence of possible flouting of policy (e.g. Heugh, 2002).<sup>5</sup> Since most systems claim to offer the international or former colonial language as the medium of instruction, school textbooks, where available, are in this language, rather than the *de facto* language(s) used by both teachers and students. External examinations similarly are in the international language. So, what we have is multilingual education by subterfuge and one that is covered by a veneer of policy compliance in the official (or former colonial) language. Neither the veneer of policy compliance nor the multilingual practices beneath the surface result in the kind of academic success to which students and their parents aspire.

This is because there are at least four missing conditions:

1. validation (or legitimisation) of both the local and international languages for the teaching and learning across the curriculum (i.e. bi-/multilingual education; sometimes known as mother tongue-based bilingual education at the individual level or mother tongue-based multilingual education at the system level)
2. explicit use of both the local language(s) and the international language in written and spoken (or signed) texts (purposeful code-switching in bilingual education)
3. bi-/multilingual textbooks and learning materials
4. bi-/multilingual assessment.

Twenty-five years ago, these conditions were together identified as necessary for systematic or 'purposeful use of code-switching' (in order that students could achieve academic proficiency in two or more languages) in South African research on bilingual and 'functional multilingual education' (Heugh et al., 1995). They happened to coincide with research in Wales in relation to translanguaging in Welsh–English bilingual education (Williams, 1996) (discussed in more detail below).

Agnihotri (e.g. 2014) writing from the Indian experience goes so far as to say that no-one learns languages in isolation from one another. Pedagogies that attempt to separate languages from one another do not suit most learners in Africa or India owing to degrees of multilingualism, mobility, and different purposes for which languages are used. Several authors have drawn attention to the productive use of deliberate, purposeful or purposive code-switching even though not officially sanctioned by education authorities in South Africa (e.g. Heugh, 2002; Plüddemann et al., 2004; Makoe & McKinney, 2009; Nomlomo, 2003; Plüddemann et al., 2010; Probyn, 2015). These authors show how teachers and students use code-switching so that students gain meaningful opportunities to learn when the official school language differs from their (and often their teachers') home languages. Legitimising what is a common practice among teachers and students would be an important advance and alternative to stigmatising an authentic and dynamic language practice (see also Heugh, 2015; Makalela, 2015; Kerfoot & Bello-Nonjengele, 2016). Wan Marjuki (2015), investigating classroom language practices in Sarawak in which students and teachers navigate Bahasa Malaysia, Bahasa Sarawak, Bahasa Iban, Bidayuh, Kenyah, and Melanau among other Indigenous languages, suggests that 'multilingualism is the medium of instruction'.<sup>6</sup>

## African research on code-mixing, code-switching, and hybridising languages

Scholars of African linguistics elsewhere have been engaged in numerous studies that explore the dynamics of multilingual practices both in society and in school settings. For example, there is a rich body of research in Africa on language mixing and the emergence of hybrid languages in highly diverse urban settings. One of the earliest scholars to draw attention to these practices and emerging hybrid languages in urban contexts was Jacob Nhlapo (Nhlapo, 1944, 1945) in South Africa. Seminal research in code-switching and language mixing, for example, is found in Burundi (Ndayipfukamiye, 1994), Senegal (Poplack & Meechan, 1995; McLaughlin, 2008; Legendre & Schindler, 2010), Uganda (Wolff, 2000), and Niger (Wolff & Alidou, 2001).

Several studies include the way that people use their linguistic resources to communicate in everyday multilingual contexts, such as in public transport and informal economic enterprises (e.g. in markets, often in cross-border contexts of trade; see, for example, Coleman, 2013). These are for horizontal purposes of communication where people try to adjust towards one another's language repertoires in order to complete transactions of an egalitarian nature. A number of studies consider how people in multilingual contexts communicate in settings where there are hierarchies at play, for example in local government offices, health and social care centres, and courts of law. In such settings, people who enter these contexts as clients, patients, plaintiffs and so on may make deliberate choices to switch from a local language to one that has greater district, regional or even national traction and that is likely to result in a positive response to a request or enquiry from a person with official responsibility. When people deliberately switch to another language which may have higher or lower status, we recognise this as vertical use of code-switching or multilingualism. Wolff (2000) offers a vignette of how multilingual children in Uganda can navigate and use several languages both for horizontal purposes of affiliation and inclusion, and to create age-based hierarchies linked specifically to who is allowed to use which language in the presence of whom. Children and youth in this setting mimic adult use of multilingualism for purposes of vertical exclusion.

The point here is that, in multilingual communities in Africa, multilingualism is a way of life. People sometimes refer to language mixing, code-switching or multilingualism. We need to remember that the vocabulary in English used to identify these processes is a poor proxy for intricate practices, processes and the vocabulary for these in the more than 2,000 languages that circulate in Africa, or indeed in the more than 7,000 languages of the world.

## Code-switching, translanguaging and north–south perspectives

As indicated earlier, the term translanguaging has entered the international discussions in English of multilingual education. There are at least three different interpretations of what the term means, and these interpretations need to be understood in relation to the different contexts in which they are used. The original coinage and use of the term translanguaging in the Welsh context by Williams (1996) seem to overlap with a deliberate or purposive bilingual pedagogy and practice in South Africa (Heugh et al., 1995) where it was called 'systematic use of code-switching'. The second interpretation of the term translanguaging has gained popularity in mainly English-dominant North

6. Sarifpah Aisah Wan Marjuki, a former student of Heugh, identified this practice in Sarawak in Malaysia as 'multilingualism is the medium of education': Wan Marjuki, SA (2015) Multilingualism and culture diversity in Sarawak. LANG 3034 Research Project, University of South Australia (unpublished).

America and England, where the focus is more on fluid processes of language use rather than as a systematic pedagogy used in bilingual education. The third interpretation of the term focuses on the complementarity rather than binary differences between the first and second perspectives, as discussed below.

In both South Africa and Wales, one approach to bilingual schooling includes the systematic or deliberate use of code-switching or deliberate use of translanguaging. This involves teaching part of the lesson in one language and part in the other, with carefully planned alternation of languages (Heugh et al., 1995; Williams, 1996) for particular functions during a lesson. What is important here is not so much the term (code-switching or translanguaging) but rather the pedagogical principles of language alternation and objectives that are clearly aligned with an educational goal for students to develop high-level bilingual capability (i.e. in two languages) for academic purposes in school. In other words, the goal and objectives found in some variants of bi-/multilingual education in South Africa from the 19th century overlap with those in bilingual schools in Wales noted by Williams and subsequently his colleagues, Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012).

The second use of the term translanguaging is associated with several influential scholars in North America, beginning with García (2009) some 15 years after Williams first used the term, and closely followed in the UK by Blackledge and Creese (2010). The large English-dominant city contexts in which García (New York) and Blackledge and Creese (Birmingham, Leicester, London and Manchester) began their ethnographic studies, and the purposes for which their studies were undertaken, are very different from translanguaging in bilingual schools in Wales or bilingual practices of code-switching with multilingual students across remote, rural and urban Sub-Saharan Africa. This is where African languages, not English (or French or Portuguese), are the main languages of communication.

García, Blackledge and Creese join a growing number of sociolinguists who question the validity of the concept of a language or languages. They suggest that there are no hard boundaries or differences between languages and that, if there were boundaries or borders between languages, these are fuzzy, porous and constantly changing. They argue that linguists should focus more on the process of how language is used, i.e. 'languaging' and translanguaging, than on the concept of a 'language' as an identifiable entity with recognisable borders.

Between 2009 and 2018, the discussions and debates among these scholars and many who work with them have evolved to the point that they propose a translanguaging pedagogy that is often delinked from bilingual or multilingual education in school and university education. One of these scholars, Wei (2018),

has gone as far as proposing translanguaging as a pedagogy, goal and theory that is an advance on what many people know as 'mixing of languages', 'code-switching', 'bilingualism' and 'multilingualism' (see also García & Wei, 2014). They suggest that translanguaging in school education expands students' linguistic repertoires with fluidity and flexibility. They further suggest that with less attention to the differences or borders between languages, education can achieve social justice, equity and positive student learning outcomes. Indeed, there is evidence that, in classrooms where most students are speakers of English, translanguaging pedagogy offers minority students affirmation, inclusion and academic progress (e.g. García & Kleyn, 2016; Menken & Sánchez, 2019). However, this second view of translanguaging has been criticised as adding little or no more scientific value than existing theories of code-switching and language mixing (Holmen, 2019). Rather it appears to be more of a 're-branding' of code-switching (Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019).

Scholars in Africa, and South and Southeast Asia need to be careful to recognise two important differences between the conditions for translanguaging in English-dominant countries of North America and the UK and those of English-minority (French-minority or Portuguese-minority) countries in Africa (and in South and Southeast Asia). The first is that where English is the majority language and where students live in an English-dominant environment, speakers of minority languages will gradually assimilate to English within one or two generations and then their languages are likely to decline in use. The second is that where African (South or Southeast Asian) languages are dominant in the social environment, and where they are used for multiple purposes or functions, English (or another former colonial language) is useful for only a limited range of functions. The 'soft' or horizontal use of translanguaging practices favoured for minority students in cities of the US or UK is certainly not sufficiently robust to offer the majority of African language-speaking students educational access to higher education or high-level job opportunities, unless the four conditions that support explicit objectives for bilingual or multilingual education (see section above, 'Diversity is more than languages') are met.

The second difference is that translanguaging as understood and used in the UK (except in Wales) and US is not necessarily new, different from or more advanced than well-researched practices of code-switching, language mixing, hybrid urban language practices, and multilingualisms in Africa and South and Southeast Asia (Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019). After 120 years of colonial and postcolonial language education policies in which one or more of the former colonial languages remains as a dominant but, nevertheless, minority language in education, there is already considerable research that shows how and what happens when teachers

use horizontal practices such as code-switching in spoken classroom discourse. As mentioned above, whether the term used is code-switching or translanguaging, it is merely a proxy of how people understand their multilingual practices. Of more substantive importance is that, in the African context, flexible or horizontal use of language practices, whether these are called code-mixing and code-switching, or whether they are called translanguaging, does not on its own provide access to higher education or high-level job opportunities beyond school.

With few exceptions, translanguaging interpreted as flexible and fluid language practices has not been shown to differ substantially from the *de facto* oral (spoken) practices of code-mixing, code-switching, translation and interpreting in schools across Africa and South and Southeast Asia for the last 120 or more years. Comprehensive and system-wide research data collected over decades in Africa shows us that horizontal language practices, such as those identified within translanguaging as spoken classroom discourse, do not bring about the kind of learning that fulfils student aspirations (see also Coleman, 2011; Heugh, 2011; Whitehead, 2011). Proficiency in a standard written language of power is what is required to provide access to and open doors for students' futures. So, we need to be careful about assuming that northern enthusiasm for translanguaging – conceptualised to include minority students into a mainstream English-medium education and economic system – might be transportable and successful in African or other southern settings where the stakes are higher and access much more difficult to attain. To imagine that in contexts where the majority of students who speak languages that are different from the minority and prestigious language of higher education will gain access to higher education through fluid or horizontal practices of translanguaging, rather than through the language of power, is unrealistic (see also Coleman, 2011). Despite much wishful thinking, there is no research evidence to show that translanguaging pedagogy that only 'softens' the edges of a hard transition to the mainstream language of educational power can offer majority African language-speaking students adequate or superior access to a language of power such as English (or indeed French or Portuguese).

Nevertheless, there is a third interpretation of translanguaging that can offer social justice, equity and inclusion. This is where code-switching or translanguaging is used purposefully and systematically in complementary recognition of both its horizontal (convivial and fluid) and vertical (hierarchical and linguistically separated) dimensions as a pedagogical objective of a bilingual or multilingual educational goal.

While it is important to be cautious about suggesting a relatively new term such as translanguaging to replace terms like language mixing and code-switching that are well known and used across Sub-Saharan Africa, in this case there is a good reason. This is because the term code-switching has been stigmatised in many postcolonial language learning and educational contexts. In rehabilitating the use of language mixing and code-switching practices it may be necessary to use a new term such as translanguaging. So, if deliberate and systematic use of horizontal and vertical code-switching is to be accepted by educational authorities after decades of believing that this is an illicit practice, translanguaging offers a convenient alternative term (e.g. Heugh, 2015; Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019).

Education officials, teacher educators and teachers therefore need to know that code-switching or translanguaging practices can only support educational success if they are highly valued and embedded in both spoken and written teaching, learning and assessment practices. The pedagogy that uses code-switching or translanguaging needs to be carefully explained in the form of objectives designed to match a goal of bilingual and/or multilingual learning outcomes for students within the education system. This, in turn, needs to be written into curriculum and high-stakes assessment documentation in the form of regulations, policy or legislation.

## Reclaiming African experience of multilingualisms and knowledge exchange: Translanguaging and transknowledging

In most of the debates about the use of terms, including code-switching, translanguaging and multilingualism in education, there is something missing. This has to do with a fundamental purpose for why people use languages in education. As indicated earlier, societies that value balance among epistemology, ontology and cosmology, and that value Indigenous knowledge systems, communality and curatorship of land or place, translation and reciprocal transfer of knowledges is highly prized. Thus, if multilingualism is the medium, and translanguaging is the linguistic process, then the process of knowledge exchange and production is 'transknowledging'.<sup>7</sup>

Points of common concern for educators and linguists in both North Atlantic and postcolonial countries include equal opportunities and access to meaningful education, social justice, inclusion and sustainability. Southern scholars know that education is also about ensuring that

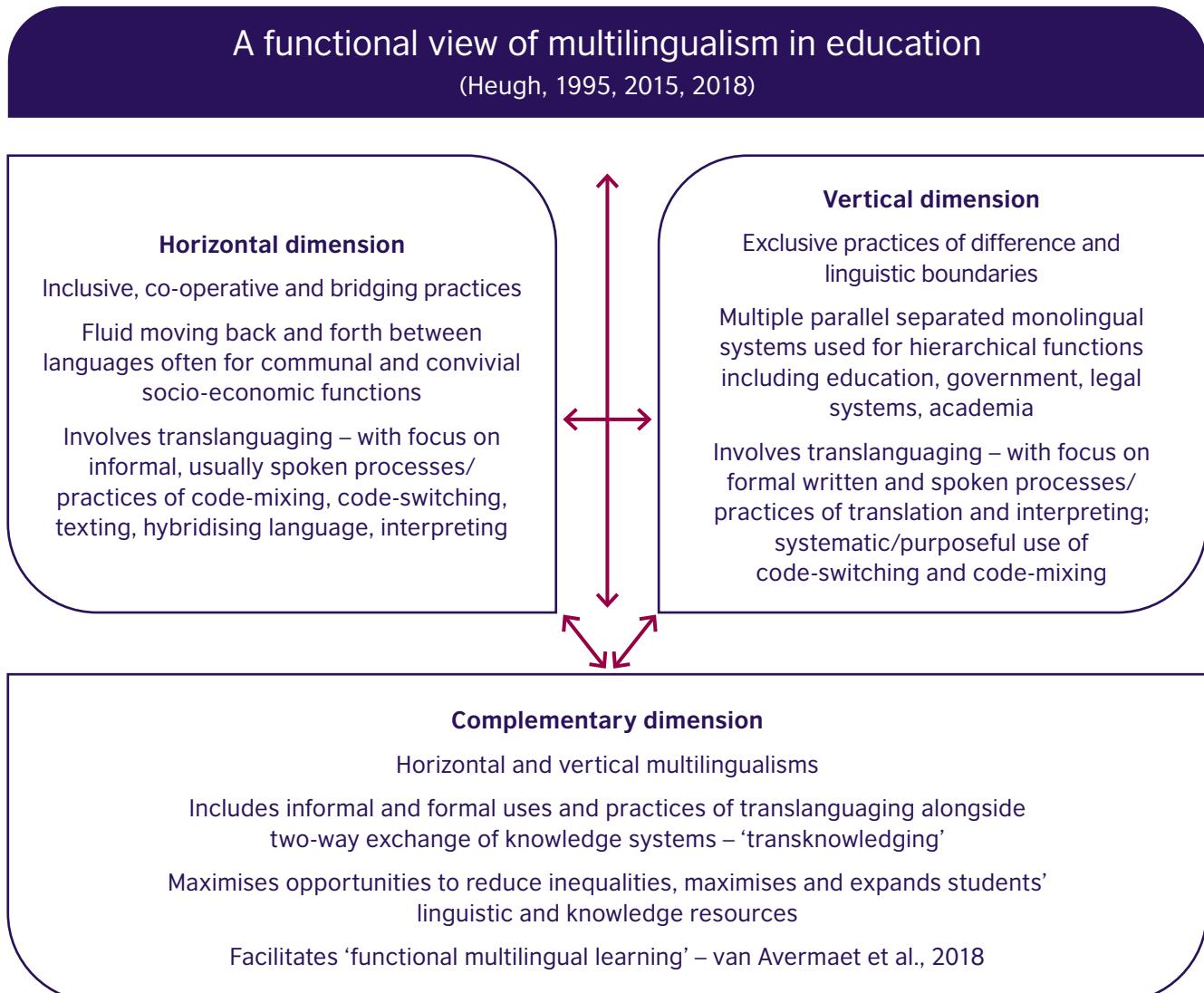
7. After three decades of research among remote communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, encounters with the wisdom of young Tribal women in India, and discussions with scholars who work alongside Indigenous communities in Australia, the significance of reciprocal exchanges of knowledge in Indigenous knowledge systems has led me to the term 'transknowledging'. It was first used in a Southern Multilingualisms Workshop in 2017 in Australia, and subsequently at the 12th Language and Development Conference in Dakar in 2017, and thereafter in teacher education workshops and conferences in Australia, Belgium, Canada, India, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Switzerland and Thailand (see also Heugh & Mohamed, 2020).

students are able to exercise their voices and agency – in other words, to be able to participate as citizens in their future lives. Multilingual education that addresses and expands both the horizontal and vertical practices of translanguaging may expand students' horizontal repertoires and provide access to vertical languages of power. It also makes possible the process of transknowledging.

In Figure 1, I try to illustrate three dimensions of 'functional multilingualism' that reflect the different functions or purposes for which people use their linguistic heterogeneity, and how they do this in relation to informal and more formal practices of translanguaging. The three dimensions need to be understood as complementary rather than as oppositional. In the first, the horizontal view, the fluidity of multilingualisms as evident in mixing, switching and translanguaging for purposes of conviviality, community and inclusivity are present.

These correspond with horizontal translanguaging, often in spoken or performed forms of communication. In the second, the vertical dimensions of multilingualisms are evident. This is where access to and use of language practices are often hierarchically configured, and practices of exclusion require a purposive educational response so that students achieve equal access to economic or educational resources beyond school. Unless students 'crack the code' and acquire vertical expertise in the gatekeepers' use of language, they will be excluded from higher education and high-end jobs in the workplace. Rather than considering the first and second of these dimensions as diametrically opposed, a third way is to consider the complementarity and interdependence of the horizontal and vertical characteristics of translanguaging as a subset of multilingualisms, and as these intersect with transknowledging. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Towards a framework for understanding multilingualism, translanguaging and transknowledging in education.  
Adapted from Heugh (2018: p. 360)



## Conclusion

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the horizontal view of multilingualism, and the informal processes of code-mixing, code-switching or translanguaging, provide only one dimension of translanguaging pedagogy in multilingual education. On its own, horizontal translanguaging, when mainly used for spoken communication, does not deliver educational success (Heugh, 2011; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). However, neither do attempts to use vertical approaches to bilingual or multilingual education in isolation from the horizontal practices of code-switching and translation that assist in meaning-making. It does not matter whether these practices are known as code-switching or translanguaging. More important is that teachers and educational planners recognise that it is necessary to work with both horizontal and vertical dimensions of multilingualisms in classrooms through complementary and systematic use of translanguaging pedagogies. These include code-mixing, code-switching, translation and interpreting for different functions and purposes. If code-switching and language mixing are to be freed from negative connotations in education, then these practices must be validated in bilingual or multilingual learning materials and classroom texts, and as objectives that support clearly articulated bilingual or multilingual goals in curriculum and assessment.

Yet, systematic or purposeful use of translanguaging as the process through which multilingualisms become defining features of educational systems offers only one of two key foundations for education. The other is the two-way (reciprocal) process of knowledge translation, exchange, production and transfer. This is the process of 'transknowledging', the often-neglected twin feature of effective or purposeful translanguaging in multilingual education. Knowledge exchange and transfer are not possible without translation and interpreting. 'Functional multilingualism', introduced to illustrate the multiple purposes and ways that people use their linguistic diversity (e.g. Heugh, 1995, 2015, 2018), can be further understood through the lens of 'functional multilingual learning' (Van Avermaet et al., 2018) where emphasis shifts towards learning. Functional multilingualism and learning are enhanced and operationalised through transknowledging. Multilingual education anchored in systematic use of translanguaging and transknowledging offers students education that sustains knowledge and language diversity, and equalises opportunities beyond school education. It has the potential to nurture student voice and agency, and participatory citizenship beyond the school door. The principles of complementarity and communalism that underpin this framework for multilingual education are therefore sensitive to both minority and majority communities, and they anchor multilingualism as a fundamental capability for 21st-century education that benefits students equally whether in southern, postcolonial or northern contexts.

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## 5. Uwezo citizen-led assessments: Inspiring debate about children's learning and holding governments accountable

Mary Goretti Nakabugo

### Abstract

In many developing countries, measuring progress towards achieving global education goals has focused on visible indicators such as infrastructure, teachers, books and enrolment. No doubt school enrolment levels have been rising over the years. The assumption has been that having children in school will, automatically, lead to learning. This assumption has led to an invisible problem of children being in school and not learning. Inspired by the *Annual Status of Education Report* (ASER) in India since 2005, and now covering 13 countries across three continents under the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network, citizen-led assessments shift the focus from inputs to learning outcomes. This chapter draws from the Uwezo citizen-led assessment movement in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to illustrate how citizen-led assessments are structured, how they differ from other assessments, where they are conducted, what they assess, how they are conducted, who assesses, when, what tools are used and on what scale. The chapter demonstrates the benefits of evidence from citizen-led assessment, and how it is utilised to inspire debate about learning and hold governments accountable.

### Introduction

Barbara Trudell's chapter on 'Globalisation and curriculum in African classrooms' (Trudell, this volume) alludes to the different international assessments such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). She argues that these assessments are mainly suitable for developed countries and not low-income or middle-income countries. She asserts that while the influence of globalisation on formal education curriculum, including globalising assessments, is flaunted as being critical to a prosperous global future, it fails to appreciate the fact that learners are not homogeneous and that learners in developing countries experience a different reality. If learning is to be 'inclusive and equitable' as Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on education envisages (United Nations, 2015), then curriculum and assessment ought to put into consideration the local reality.

This chapter focuses on an assessment that originates from the Global South, implemented in the South, by people in the South. For several years, progress towards achieving 'Education for All' (as defined by the six education goals agreed by 164 participating countries at the Dakar World Forum in 2000, and effectively replaced by the more comprehensive SDG 4 since 2015) has, in many developing countries, focused mainly on visible aspects of education such as the numbers of classrooms built, teachers recruited, textbooks purchased and children enrolled in school. As a result of this focus, school enrolments are very high in most developing countries and many are almost achieving universal education for all. The sad reality, however, is that many children are in school but are not learning – not even the basics of reading and counting. In most countries the assumption is that children are in school and that, therefore, they are learning. For most countries, schooling is the same as learning. The challenge has been to visualise the fact that schooling and learning are not the same and that children are often in school but not learning. Citizen-led assessments were started, mainly, to visualise this learning crisis and present it in a very simple language; and to make the people responsible, especially government, accountable and take action.

In this chapter, I will describe what drove the development of citizen-led assessment, originally in India, how the methodology evolved and gained in influence, and how citizen-led assessments were gradually set up in other countries, eventually forming the global People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network. I go on to draw on my own experience working at Uwezo in East Africa to explain the principles of citizen-led assessment and why they are important, before explaining why using citizen-volunteers as the assessors, which is often contentious, is critical to its success. The chapter shares the dynamics of the relationship with governments in the three countries, and how assessment evidence can generate intended and unintended results. The chapter shows the impacts of citizen-led assessments to date and how the assessments are evolving to reach more unreached children, including those in refugee contexts. Finally, the chapter illustrates the future challenges for citizen-led assessments, such

as ensuring rigour and comparability of assessment data within and across countries, broadening and deepening the assessment to produce evidence in other critical areas of children's learning beyond literacy and numeracy, and the need to utilise assessment data to make connections to concrete actions to improve children's learning.

## The evolution of citizen-led assessment: ASER in India

In 2005 India's largest NGO, Pratham, realised that there was a problem: children's learning levels were low, but there was no evidence for this which could be presented to government and the different actors. They therefore developed a simple literacy and numeracy tool and mobilised citizens in villages, across all districts in India, to undertake a household survey of learning. Within 100 days India had the results of its first ever *Status of Education Report*. That gave birth to the ASER (*Annual Status of Education Report*). The word aser means 'impact' in Hindi; if any country is to be proud of its education system, it is important to know the impact that its education system is having on the lives of children, including the acquisition of basic skills which are important to survive in the real world.

The results of the ASER assessment were appalling. Among 7- to 14-year-olds, only about half of them could read a primary Grade 2-level story (the level expected of a 7- to 8-year-old). About 35 per cent of 14- to 17-year-olds could not complete a division task of three digits at primary Grade 2 level. The government initially rejected the ASER findings, claiming, among other criticisms, that Pratham did not have the mandate to carry out such a learning assessment. This did not stop Pratham from continuing to conduct the learning assessment every year, and every year they produced a national report on the status of education which they communicated widely, and which received widespread media coverage and public debate. By 2008, the ASER Centre was established as a specialised, independent unit within the Pratham network to conduct this work. Because of the growing public interest in the ASER, the government eventually began to pay attention. A discussion started happening in parliament and action was taken. For example, in 2011 the new Five-Year Plan of India was announced, stressing the measuring of learning and improvement of basic skills among the nation's children. By the end of 2015 almost all states had done their own state-level assessment of learning, spurred by the ASER.

## The spread of citizen-led assessment to other countries beyond India

The success story of the ASER citizen-led assessment approach inspired several other countries across the world. In 2008 Pakistan and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) were introduced to the methodology by the ASER Centre in India. The Pakistani citizen-led assessment initiative was named ASER Pakistan and it conducted its first pilot assessment in 2008. The East African initiative, hosted by a regional organisation, Twaweza East Africa until 2019,<sup>1</sup> was named Uwezo (meaning 'capability'). Uwezo conducted its first pilot assessment in Kenya in 2009. Following the success of this pilot, the assessment was rolled out in Uganda and Tanzania in 2010, and other countries in Africa also became interested in the approach. Representatives from Mali visited Uwezo Kenya to learn about the approach, and Mali conducted its first pilot in 2011 under the name Béekunko (meaning 'the concern of everyone'). Senegal followed with a visit to ASER Centre in India and began its own citizen-led assessment initiative, Jàngandoo (meaning 'to learn together'), in 2012. In Nigeria, another citizen-led assessment initiative named LEARNigeria (Let's Engage, Assess and Report Nigeria) was born in 2015, having been introduced to the approach by Uwezo. LEARNigeria is implemented by the Education Partnership Center based in Lagos. In 2014, Latin America came on board with a pilot in Mexico, having been inducted into the citizen-led assessment methodology by India. The initiative in Mexico is known as Medición Independiente de Aprendizajes (MIA), meaning 'independent measurement of learning'.

To date, citizen-led assessments have been embraced in 13 countries on three continents. The major strength of the citizen-led assessment approach is that it is not a mere duplication of the methodology in a given country. Countries learn about the approach and adapt it to their unique contexts.

Table 1 summarises the different citizen-led assessment initiatives as of March 2020.

1. As of 2020, Uwezo East Africa is now operating as three independent entities in Uganda (Uwezo Uganda), Tanzania (Uwezo Tanzania) and Kenya (Usawa Agenda).

**Table 1:** Citizen-led assessment initiatives around the world (as of March 2020)

S/N	Name of the initiative	Country	Year of first (pilot) assessment
1	ASER Centre	India	2005
2	ASER Pakistan	Pakistan	2008
3	Uwezo Kenya (now operating as Usawa Agenda)	Kenya	2009
4	Uwezo Tanzania	Tanzania	2010
5	Uwezo Uganda	Uganda	2010
6	Beeenkunko	Mali	2011
7	Jàngandoo	Senegal	2012
8	MIA (Medición Independiente de Aprendizajes – 'independent assessment of learning')	Mexico	2014
9	LEARNigeria	Nigeria	2015
10	IID (Institute of Informatics and Development) and BRAC	Bangladesh	2015
11	TPC Mozambique	Mozambique	2016
12	ASER Nepal	Nepal	2016
13	VIdA (Valoración Intersubjetiva del Aprender – 'intersubjective assessment of learning')	Nicaragua	2017

Source: PAL Network: <http://palnetwork.org/>

In summary: citizen-led assessments have a history of 15 years to date, across 13 countries, are conducted by over 600,000 volunteers, and are administered in over 30 languages, including English, French, Portuguese and many other local languages. In those 15 years, citizen-led assessments have assessed over 8.5 million children in literacy and numeracy.

As the citizen-led assessment movement grew into a large and powerful family, operating in isolation became undesirable. In 2014 the countries embracing citizen-led assessment united together under a single umbrella body, the PAL Network. The network is headquartered in Nairobi and ensures that the countries are focused on the one major goal of bringing learning to the centre of education policy and practice, as well as ensuring that there is learning across the countries. Recently, there has been growing interest from other countries to join the PAL Network citizen-led assessment movement, including the Dominican Republic, Peru, Eswatini and Indonesia. Botswana has also been a member of the PAL Network since 2018 doing citizen-led action to improve learning. By March 2020 it had not yet started implementing citizen-led assessments.

## Case study: Uwezo citizen-led assessment in depth

In this section I will use my experience at the Uwezo East Africa citizen-led assessment initiative to demonstrate how these assessments are conducted. I will also show how evidence from the assessments is used to bring learning to the centre of policy and public debate and to hold our governments accountable for children's learning.

Uwezo citizen-led learning assessment, previously a programme of Twaweza East Africa until 2019, and now operating as three independent entities, has been conducted regularly in three countries – Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania – since 2009. The programme works with thousands of citizen-volunteers in thousands of households in these three countries to generate evidence on the actual learning levels of children aged six to 16 in early grade reading and numeracy. In the last seven years Uwezo has reached and assessed over 1.5 million children across Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.<sup>2</sup>

2. Some Uwezo learning assessment reports can be accessed via the following links:  
<http://twaweza.org/uploads/files/East%20Africa%20Report%202015.pdf>  
[www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uganda%20Report%202016%20Web%20Pages.pdf](http://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uganda%20Report%202016%20Web%20Pages.pdf)  
[www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uwezo\\_EA\\_Report-EN-FINAL.pdf](http://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uwezo_EA_Report-EN-FINAL.pdf)

The idea of Uwezo is simple: parents send their children to school because they expect them to learn. They want them to learn to read, write, count and to acquire many other skills that are needed to thrive in the world. Therefore, instead of asking for the opportunities that the education provides to children such as the number of classrooms, the number of teachers or the number of textbooks, Uwezo asks one major question: 'Are our children learning?' To answer this question, Uwezo, like other citizen-led assessment programmes, works on five main principles (also refer to Nakabugo, 2016).

- 1. Assess basic skills including reading and simple arithmetic** because these are believed to be the foundations of learning. If children cannot read, write and count, it is very difficult for them to acquire higher skills.
- 2. Assess children orally, one on one.** Most conventional assessments are undertaken using pencil/pen and paper. However, these assume that children already know how to read and write and that they are familiar with the language of assessment – but many children cannot read and/or understand the official languages. In the case of citizen-led assessments, the assessor enters the household and asks the child to perform primary Grade 2-level reading and arithmetic exercises orally, and records the results in a standardised survey booklet. Citizen-led assessments avoid making the assumption that all children can read. Learning and assessment ought to be equitable and oral assessments give all children a level playing field.
- 3. Assess children in their homes.** Citizen-led assessments believe that home is the best place to find a good representation of all children. In developing countries, where dropout rates and absenteeism are quite high, the only place where it is possible to find most of the children is in the household. Assessments that are done at school assess those children who are at school on a certain day. In addition, assessing in the household has the advantage of engaging parents and guardians in conversations about the learning of their children.
- 4. Work with local volunteers to assess children.** The local volunteers must have a minimum of four years of secondary education and are recruited from their communities. With this minimum qualification, the recruited individuals are trainable and able to conduct the learning assessment and the household survey. As will be elaborated later on, the involvement of local volunteers has the advantage of working with individuals who can speak the children's local language, thereby breaking the language barrier to an extent. In addition, these local volunteers can continue the debate about

learning in their communities long after the assessment has been completed.

- 5. Communicate the assessment findings regularly.** Uwezo believes that research which is not communicated to the relevant audiences is unhelpful. Uwezo communicates the assessment findings in public and policy forums to influence policy and practice.

## The strengths and challenges of undertaking learning assessments using citizen-volunteers

Over the years, citizen-led assessments have been criticised for using local volunteers (instead of teachers or professional researchers) to undertake the learning assessments. At Uwezo, our argument is that volunteers are part of the community in which the assessment takes place; they are citizens who are concerned about children's learning. Citizen-led assessments demystify learning as a concern of teachers alone and make it a concern for everyone, and ordinary citizens need to acquire a basic understanding of what constitutes learning so that they are able to support it. By participating in the assessment, and doing it in the households, we assume that the volunteers themselves as well as the parents in the assessed households acquire this basic understanding of learning (Mugo et al., 2016).

Furthermore, citizen-led assessments are intended to be as independent as possible. Since assessment is done in the communities in which schools are located, the intention is to minimise the possibility of teachers assessing the children they teach, to reduce bias. This is the main reason Uwezo recruits relatively independent volunteers at the community level (two per village) and rigorously trains them in basic research and assessment principles to conduct the household survey and learning assessment. In addition, since the training of volunteers takes place on weekdays, working with non-teachers ensures that teachers do not miss classes because of the learning assessment. Uwezo wants to ensure that teachers are in school and teaching.

Most importantly, the volunteers speak the local languages of the children and the parents. This is critical to ensure easy communication between the volunteers, the children and their parents. William Savage's presentation at the 12th Language and Development Conference underscored the power of listening and being listened to. Referencing Wheatley (2002, 2005), Savage noted: 'Listening creates a relationship. We move closer to one another (Wheatley 2002: 91) ... If we can speak our story and know that others hear it, we are somehow healed by that (Wheatley 2005: 218).'<sup>3</sup> This is also very important in research. Once the research subjects are part

3. Savage, W. Facilitated advocacy for sustainable development: An approach and its paradoxes. Unpublished paper presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 28 November 2017.

of the conversation and notice they are being listened to, they feel part of the research and are likely to respond without hesitation. In the context of a learning assessment, working with local volunteers who speak the language of the children makes it possible for the assessment to be administered in a conversational tone to ease tension with the children and make them comfortable.

There have, however, also been several challenges working with volunteers. The first has been to convince policymakers and researchers that citizen-volunteers can assess and generate reliable and valid results on children's learning. Fortunately, an independent study undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) on the validity and reliability of Uwezo assessment using Uwezo volunteers compared to an expert rater confirmed 'high levels of agreement in scores' between the different assessors (ACER, 2015: p. 10). Furthermore, the Uwezo learning survey has been found to 'provide a better coverage of populations and specifically of hard-to-reach poorer areas than the international standardised household surveys' (Carr-Hill, 2017: p. 249): a finding which further confirms Uwezo assessment validity.

Another challenge has been the retention of volunteers, especially young volunteers who are always on the move looking for employment opportunities. At Uwezo, we have realised that where it is possible to find qualified, settled and mature community members, who are interested in education and willing to volunteer their time, it is these individuals who should be given first priority as they can be trained and retained easily. Furthermore, in remote areas, finding qualified volunteers within the same village is often a challenge. Sometimes recruitment of volunteers for a given surveyed 'enumeration area' (a defined geographical area, made up of a village, part of a village, or several villages combined) goes beyond the boundaries of the village in cases where there are no qualifying volunteers.

Finally, volunteering in the context of the Uwezo learning assessment is not free. There are associated costs, including providing modest funds to cover volunteers' expenses such as transport and refreshments while in the field. Given the large scale at which citizen-led assessments are conducted (requiring 60 volunteers per surveyed census district), these associated costs can be relatively high.

## The influence of Uwezo citizen-led assessments at global and national level

Uwezo's message, over the years, that 'schooling isn't leading to learning' (Uwezo, 2017) has gained traction nationally, regionally and globally.

At the global level, SDG 4 on education was instituted on the basis that the 2000–15 Education for All and Millennium Development Goals agendas had put much more focus on access than on quality. Many children were (and still are) in school and not learning. However, significantly, in late September 2017, the *World Development Report 2018: LEARNING to Realize Education's Promise* was published and its opening sentence was: 'Schooling is not the same as learning' (World Bank, 2018: p. 3). This was the core of the message that Uwezo, since 2009, inspired by India's ASER and in collaboration with other citizen-led learning assessments around the world under the PAL Network, helped to demonstrate and amplify.

Evidence from citizen-led assessments indicating that children were in school and not learning even the basic competences of reading and arithmetic contributed a great deal to bringing the issue of access plus learning to the centre of education discourse as espoused in SDG 4. Furthermore, evidence from Uwezo assessments focused attention on improving learning outcomes, especially early grade reading, in the three East African countries where it is implemented. The different interventions by developing partners in partnership with government, such as the USAID/RTI-funded Uganda School Health and Reading Program (SHRP)<sup>4</sup> and the DFID-funded Strengthening Education Systems for Improved Learning (SESIL),<sup>5</sup> draw from the available assessment evidence, such as Uwezo's, to justify investing in improving the foundations and early grade learning.

At the national level, Uwezo citizen-led assessments have helped to hold governments and key stakeholders accountable for children's learning, albeit with mixed negative and positive reactions to the assessment findings that have resulted. It has not been unusual for government officials to make statements such as the following, in reaction to Uwezo assessment findings that indicate that many children are not learning to read and count.

- 'We don't trust Uwezo methodology and use of unqualified volunteers,' Ministry of Education representative speaking at the Uwezo Tanzania (2012) report launch event on 17 December 2013.
- In October 2017, the state minister for sports in Uganda slammed the sixth Uwezo Uganda assessment report, which showed that upper primary school pupils lacked Primary 2 (second year of primary education) level literacy and numeracy competences (Uwezo, 2016). He described the report as 'malicious since the assessment parameters were not systematic and their credibility was questionable' (Kugonza, 2017).

4. See <https://www.educationinnovations.org/p/uganda-school-health-and-reading-program-shrp>

5. See <https://sts-international.org/portfolio/strengthening-education-systems-for-improved-learning/>

In some instances, however, the Ugandan government has referenced Uwezo findings when it has suited it. In March 2015, the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) announced that they would go on strike unless a promised ten per cent pay rise was included in the next budget. On 15 May 2015 they finally made good on their threat, announcing that the strike would start the following Monday, 18 May. The start of the strike coincided with the release of the Uwezo report, which showed that Uganda had performed poorly in literacy and numeracy learning outcomes across the region. This prompted the education ministry to scoff at UNATU's strike threats, urging the teachers to show value for the money they were already receiving (Talemwa & Nangonzi, 2015).

With the government using Uwezo assessment results as a basis for criticising teachers, teachers themselves have sometimes gone on the defensive claiming that 'Uwezo assessment is an abuse to teachers – I have not met a single teacher who confirms that the assessment was done in their school' (chairperson of a teachers' union). Such statements are made despite the fact that Uwezo assessment is done in the household and not at school.

Nevertheless, governments have been receptive to Uwezo findings on several occasions.

- While launching Uwezo Kenya's 2012 learning assessment report on 23 July 2013, which had indicated that many children completed primary schooling without the basic literacy and arithmetic competencies (Uwezo Kenya, 2013), the director general of Kenya Vision 2030 applauded the report as an accurate yardstick of the country's state of education. He cautioned thus: 'We do not have a choice, we must succeed in achieving Vision 2030 and education is a vital foundation' (Obala, 2013).
- While launching Uwezo Uganda's eighth assessment report on behalf of the minister of education and sports on 19 November 2019, which indicated that the number of primary school-going children who could read and count had dropped in the last three years (Uwezo, 2019), the director of education standards agreed that 'the government first concentrated on ensuring every child is enrolled in school which later caused overcrowding that has affected the quality of learning' (Ahimbisibwe, 2019). She assured that the report findings would be used to feed into Uganda's education sector's five-year strategic plan that was being developed.

## Conclusion: The future of Uwezo citizen-led learning assessments

This chapter has discussed the strengths of citizen-led assessments, particularly the strength of working with local volunteers who speak the language of the children being assessed, and the advantages of doing the assessment in the household (Mugo et al., 2016).

However, the assessments are also faced with some limitations that we are continuing to grapple with and to address. For example, much as Uwezo claims that when assessment is conducted in the household it is possible to reach all children, the truth is that there are some populations who do not live in conventional households. These include children living on the streets, children in foster homes, children in refugee settlements and also children in boarding schools. Over the years, Uwezo has been trying to close the gap, and to widen the reach and inclusion of different children in the assessment. For example, in 2017, Uwezo Uganda with support from the Humanitarian Emergency Refugee Response in Uganda (HERRU) and DFID Uganda, implemented the first ever pilot citizen-led assessment in refugee settlements in four refugee-hosting districts in Uganda (Uwezo, 2018). This new initiative again underscores the power of language in assessment: when assessing in a refugee settlement, it was critical to work with local refugee volunteers who spoke the language of the children.

Other challenges facing Uwezo citizen-led assessments include the current inability to assess children with severe disabilities, such as deaf people and blind people or those with mental illness, due to lack of capacity to do this. The narrow focus on basic literacy and numeracy is also an acknowledged limitation. We are exploring and developing the possibility of including assessment of selected soft and emotional skills and everyday adult knowledge into future Uwezo assessments. Finally, ensuring the comparability of assessment results within and across the three countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania is an issue we are continuing to refine. These three countries implementing Uwezo citizen-led assessments in East Africa have different education contexts, and work with different curricula. Therefore, trying to compare findings across these countries requires ensuring that the assessment tasks follow the national curriculum of that particular country such that when a claim is made that Primary 3 children (in the third year of primary) are not able to read a Primary 2-level story, the story in question is at the level of that country's curriculum so that valid comparisons can be made.

These developments will take shape in the future given the appropriate funding, and will help refine the citizen-led approach to assessment.

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## 6. Lessons for the UN from the US: Complementary schools as partners in sustainable development and equitable education

Shannon Bischoff and Mary Encabo

### Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not immune to critiques due to their scope and intent. One critique stems from the lack of attention given to the role of language in relation to the SDGs (Marinotti, 2016). Language is utilised in many activities of daily living, but its importance is not thoroughly considered during the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the SDGs. To plan for more effective strategies that will support the progress of the SDGs, including those that involve consideration of language, UN agencies and other stakeholders need to expand their collaborative partnerships to include more community-based and grassroots initiatives. One possible partnership is with complementary schools (CS), which are alternative forms of education that promote mother tongue-based education, multilingualism and multiculturalism. This chapter presents three case studies involving complementary schools from different communities in the US:

1. an indigenous community
2. a refugee and immigrant community
3. private K-12 schools in colonial Puerto Rico.

It provides recommendations for further research regarding the role of complementary schools in contributing to the success of the SDGs, in particular SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

### Introduction: Grassroots approaches to language and development

During the 12th Language and Development Conference in Dakar, speakers and delegates raised an essential question: How should development be conceptualised in relation to language? Based on the reactions of participants, at least one response involves the acknowledgement that all languages are equal. However, there is also the unavoidable reality that some languages have more economic and political power than others. English and French, for example, are considered global languages whereby speakers of these languages are

able to take part in the global economy, not just in their local economy. At the same time, as Djité (this volume) and Ouane and Glanz (2010) point out, local languages dominate the local and informal economy in African nations, which suggests that local languages play a crucial role in the economic development of the region. Another response to the question would be that development means inclusivity and participation of people who are not often perceived as experts. Nakabugo (this volume) shares the impact of citizen-led assessments, their potential to advocate strongly for communities, and the ways in which data could be used to hold governments accountable for policies. This approach continues to show promise and builds a case for grassroots community-based approaches for sustainable development similar to that proposed here.

In addition, it was noted at the conference that the challenges of implementing multilingual education continue to be related to the tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches to language planning, policy, and practice. In general, language policies tend to employ top-down approaches, which means that community members, whose lives are directly affected by the policies, do not have much influence on the creation and content of the policies. Ideally, language planning would utilise both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Bottom-up approaches are considered grassroots and include community-based research and involvement. A grassroots approach is broadly defined as one that is initiated, controlled and funded directly by or in conjunction with community members (Bischoff & Fountain, 2013). Rice (2011) notes the following regarding community-based research:

*Community-based research has at its core community involvement through all stages of the research [...] Similar definitions are found in other places. The Centre for Community Based Research [...] identifies three major aspects of this type of research [...]*

- *Community situated: research begins with a topic of practical relevance to the community (as opposed to individual scholars) and is carried out in a community setting.*

- *Collaborative: community members and researchers equitably share control of the research agenda through active and reciprocal involvement in the research design, implementation, and dissemination.*
- *Action-oriented: the process and results are useful to community members in making positive social change and promoting social equity.*

Rice (2011: pp. 189–190)

For our purposes, 'community-based' with regard to policy means the active involvement of the community through all stages of the policy-to-outcome path (Grin, 2003a: p. 47) as full partners in the spirit, if not letter, of Rice's remarks above and elsewhere (e.g. Bischoff & Jany, 2018 and references therein).

While top-down language policies in general have received much criticism, it is worth noting that their goals (e.g. providing quality education, improving students' literacy and numeracy, and promoting multilingual education) could be similar to the local community members' goals as we argue below. In addition, it is possible for top-down language policies to intersect with bottom-up grassroots projects. For example, in the case of the Mon community described below we are presently working with the community-based complementary school leaders in efforts to get the programme recognised in the state's Seal of Biliteracy programme (Californians Together, 2019). This programme provides official recognition of students' bilingual skills with a special high school diploma upon graduation. This is similar to Punjabi complementary schools in the UK that are recognised as partners in the GCSE Punjabi language qualifications (Anderson, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

After decades of research and innovations in the development sector, it is crucial to strive for unity among stakeholders by employing more grassroots approaches and allowing community members to take ownership of the sustainable development agenda.

In this chapter we explore the particularities of complementary schools and present three case studies involving complementary schools from different communities in the US:

1. an indigenous community
2. a refugee and immigrant community
3. private K-12 schools in colonial Puerto Rico.

We make recommendations for areas which warrant further research and argue that complementary schools can support the achievement of common goals in sustainable development, in particular SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

## Complementary schools as spaces for language learning, cultural preservation and integration

Complementary schools (CS) are examples of grassroots initiatives. CS are voluntary community-based schools that may or may not have relationships with state agencies.<sup>2</sup> As the name implies, CS are intended to 'complement' formal education or state-sponsored schools. Unlike state-sponsored schools, CS have more flexible class schedules. Some schools conduct their classes during the weekends throughout the year, while others hold classes during the summer. Although the school calendar varies, CS focus on teaching and maintaining the students' heritage language<sup>3</sup> and culture through literacy and language instruction. They 'represent individual and community attempts to organise themselves voluntarily to privilege other histories, languages and cultures not easily available to them in mainstream education' (Creese et al., 2006: p. 25). CS become spaces for students to learn about community values, engage in cultural practices and develop their multicultural identity. Importantly, our research demonstrates this multicultural identity embodies both the dominant society and that promoted in the CS. This is different from international schools or basic community schools (*écoles communautaires de base* or ECB) in Senegal, which are not necessarily focused on providing mother tongue-based education (Boubacar & François, 2007).

The existing literature highlights the academic benefits of providing mother tongue-based education (McCarty & Snell, 2011; Pinnock, 2009 among others). For example, when schools provide mother tongue-based instruction for at least six to eight years students do better academically (Ouane & Glanz, 2010; Ball, 2011). Further, overall costs of education are lower when students have access to quality education in their heritage language since repeat rates decrease and graduation rates increase (Arcand & Grin, 2013; Rassool, 2013; Grin,

1. Both the UK and Fort Wayne examples suggest ways in which community-based grassroots heritage language complementary schools might become *institutionalised* as argued by Hitchins Chik et al. (2017). This point is revisited in 'Areas for further research' later in this chapter.

2. For discussion see, for example, Kagan et al. (2017), Anderson (2008), and Creese et al. (2006), among others.

3. Throughout this chapter we use the phrases 'heritage language' and 'mother tongue' interchangeably to indicate what others might refer to as mother tongue, home language, first language, heritage mother tongue, heritage language or other variants attempting to recognise the language(s) which learners in their community and home acquire before formalised schooling age or the ancestral language no longer commonly learned by infant community members. We also acknowledge the difficulties of defining such terms.

2003b; Ouane & Glanz, 2010; Pinnock, 2009 among others). CS serve as an additional form of support in developing students' proficiency in their mother tongue and literacy skills, thus improving education attainment in general and reducing costs for education in mainstream state-sponsored schools.

It is important to note that CS do not follow a standard model. Their diversity in structure, curriculum and practice is arguably an important part of their success in achieving their goals and reflective of their grassroots nature (see Kagan et al., 2017). The following case studies illustrate various strengths as well as potential challenges posed by CS. We should note that, while each of the case studies is situated in a unique setting and context, we believe the lessons learned can be of value: minimally heuristically. Other communities across the globe and policymakers in many ways share the same problems and challenges (e.g. inequality and lack of access to equitable education), although context may demand different solutions to these problems.

While all the case studies are uniquely positioned within their respective communities they have a number of features in common. Each school is:

1. focused on language and culture education through *literacy and literacy ideologies*
2. grassroots in nature
3. embedded in a national English-only and monolingual ideology articulated through policies of Americanisation through English
4. situated in a community where at some point in the past a majority of community members harboured nation-state aspirations for the community, which for most has been superseded by cultural nationalism grounded in heritage language as it relates to identity.

We now turn to the case studies and what they tell us about CS and policy.

## Case study 1: The Coeur d'Alene<sup>4</sup> community

The Coeur d'Alene community is an indigenous community with a reservation located in the US state of Idaho. The community, like all indigenous communities in the US, suffered greatly under Federal US colonial expansion, the reservation system, and an active and deliberate eradication of indigenous language and culture through a federal policy of Americanisation through English (Wiley & Bhalla, 2017; Harvey, 2015).

Presently there are approximately 1,300 community members with most living on or near the reservation. The community has a tribal school system where the language of instruction is English. Within the community there are perhaps two elderly speakers who learned the Coeur d'Alene language as a mother tongue and a small, but growing, group of speakers who have learned the language as an additional language through the CS. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 indigenous communities in the US had greater opportunities to revitalise and maintain their heritage languages. In the case of the Coeur d'Alene community at this time the seeds were planted for what would become in the mid-1990s the official Tribal Language Department and its CS.

In 2009 co-author Bischoff, a linguist and Coeur d'Alene scholar, reached out to the then director of the Language Programme to discuss how his work and skills might be of use in the tribal language and culture revitalisation and maintenance efforts. They agreed to develop a digital archive and web interface that would be available to tribal members. The idea was that Bischoff would deposit over 1,000 pages of heritage materials recording the Coeur d'Alene language and culture, in English and Coeur d'Alene in written form, into the newly created digital archive. This would allow the language department staff to access the material for the development of pedagogical materials via the web. In addition, it was decided to develop an online searchable bilingual English–Coeur d'Alene dictionary.

Bischoff and a team including Audra Vincent, a community member, trained linguist and presently the director of the Language Programme; academics; and engineers developed what is today the Coeur d'Alene Online Language Resource Center (COLRC).<sup>5</sup> Making the material digital and available free online was a way to repatriate linguistic and cultural material to the community as well as provide new resources for developing pedagogical materials for the CS. It was also an opportunity for grassroots community-based research. The grassroots collaborative approach made it possible to explore issues all members of the project would not necessarily have encountered otherwise and for relationships to develop that allowed for frank discussion of challenging issues.

4. Here we use the term Coeur d'Alene as that is the term used by the tribal government and Language Programme. The Coeur d'Alene also refer to themselves as *Schitsu'umsh* or *Skitswish*. The name Coeur d'Alene was given to the tribe in the late 18th or early 19th Century by French traders and trappers. In French, it means 'Heart of the Awl', referring to the sharpness of the trading skills exhibited by tribal members in their dealings with visitors (<https://www.cdatrIBE-NSN.gov/our-tribe/history/>).
5. The COLRC can be accessed at <http://lasrv01.pfw.edu/COLRC/reichard.php> (project supported by the National Science Foundation Awards, Foundation 1160627-BCS and 1160394-BCS). To learn more about the digital resources and the project see Bischoff et al. (2014, 2017, 2018) and Bischoff and Fountain (2013).

The primary takeaway of relevance from the project is that the academic and engineer team members naively believed digital resources would be widely utilised in the community. It was brought to the team members' attention that there is a significant digital divide in the US, especially in what is referred to as 'Indian Country'. Morris and Meinrath (2009) found that only five per cent of Indian Country had access to high-speed internet and the numbers seem to have changed little in recent years (Parkhurst et al., 2015). However, the Coeur d'Alene community was perhaps unique in that the tribal government had developed the infrastructure for community-wide internet access. Despite the access, it was discovered that community members preferred to engage the language and culture materials in printed formats, not digital (see Langely et al., 2018 for discussion of similar outcomes in the Coushatta community).

This raised a number of questions for the team, including: who benefits from digital resources? Both the academics and the funding agency benefited from the quantifiable and countable nature of digital resources and the claim that other scholars could access the material for future *scientific* research. Further, the entire project could be viewed as an experiment in digital data storage and retrieval. However, it seemed that the community itself, other than the Language Programme, found little to no value in many of the digital resources created. As a direct result of this we are now redeveloping the resources so that they can be printed on demand in order to meet the literacy preferences and practices within the community.

In short, we discovered that digital access, which is not nearly as ubiquitous as might be thought, does not ensure a culture (culture of literacy in this case) that embraces such access. Further, that the good intentions of the team members did not always align with community needs.<sup>6</sup> Thanks to the grassroots community-based approach we were able to develop close relationships and thus find workarounds to satisfy, and modify, the needs and goals of all. Had this been a top-down approach the community most likely would not have been involved other than to be *informed* of the outcomes – outcomes that demonstrably would not have met the specific needs of the community.

## Case study 2: Mon language school<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1990s approximately 6,000 refugees from Burma,<sup>8</sup> with roughly 1,000 being Mon, began arriving in Fort Wayne Indiana, a refugee relocation city in the US. In Burma there are perhaps 750,000 Mon speakers (Lewis et al., 2019) and 100,000 additionally outside Burma, with most in Thailand and smaller communities in Singapore

and the US. The Mon have a long history of literacy and literature which has played an important role in the extant history of CS developed by the community first in Burma and in 1999 in Fort Wayne. The development of the CS was motivated by the desire to maintain Mon language and culture and is intimately linked to Theravada Buddhism, ethnic identity and local temples.

In 2013 Dr Chad Thompson, a colleague of the authors, developed a personal relationship with Mon leaders. The Mon leaders, knowing that community members valued expert knowledge, asked Dr Thompson if he could find empirical evidence demonstrating the value of the CS for students. The leaders hoped sharing such findings would facilitate continued, and wider, participation in the CS. Of the approximately 600 Mon youth nearly 200 participate annually in the Mon CS, which runs from May until October on weekends. Thus, Dr Thompson and his team, including co-author Bischoff, developed a heritage language and well-being study that also looked at literacy and fluency in both English and Mon.

The community-based study was conducted at the Mon CS and involved Mon youth not only as participants but also as members of the data collecting team. The goal was to determine if there were correlations between heritage language and general well-being and to determine literacy and fluency<sup>9</sup> rates in both Mon and English. While most research that we are familiar with focuses on the material or economic advantages of multilingualism, in the Mon study we wanted to explore the correlation between well-being and heritage language to broaden our understanding of the benefits of multilingualism and CS as they relate to identity, education, integration and the human experience more broadly. Recent work has found a correlation between heritage language use and generalised physical, psychological, and emotional well-being (Whalen et al., 2016 and references therein).

When measuring for psychological well-being, chronic stress, academic success (in mainstream schools) and self-esteem, we found a correlation between such factors and the use of the heritage language and attendance at the CS. In addition, we found that student fluency and literacy rates were at grade level or higher for English and at the expected levels for the CS for Mon. Further, we found that students attending the CS had higher grades in their mainstream schools than their non-Mon peers. In short, the study demonstrated a correlation between academic success, literacy, well-being, and the heritage language. An unanticipated finding was data that the CS students appeared to be developing multilingual and multicultural identities that embraced both their Mon culture and the culture of the dominant society.

6. In the earliest iteration of the resource even the Language Programme staff found the online dictionary (which had been designed solely by academics) to be useless.
7. To learn more about the Mon project see Yekha et al. (2017).
8. The Mon refer to their country of origin as Burma rather than Myanmar. We use their term here.
9. We acknowledge that notions of literacy and fluency are complex and not easily definable. In many ways they are problematic terms.

While we are presently expanding the study, these preliminary findings are significant for policymakers as they demonstrate:

1. the values of ethnic minorities can mirror those of the dominant society (strong literacy, quality education, healthy youth, etc.)
2. it is possible for ethnic minorities to maintain their ethnic identity while simultaneously adopting a dominant society identity through additive multiculturalism and multilingualism
3. ethnic minorities can be working toward the same goals as the dominant society separate from the dominant society through CS
4. CS can benefit the broader society in unexpected ways such as facilitating mainstream academic success, furthering integration and fostering well-being among minority youth – all necessary for the success of any one of the SDGs and all potentially accessible to communities willing to embrace grassroots collaborative efforts.

### Case study 3: Puerto Rico<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the Coeur d'Alene and Mon CS described above, what we refer to as CS in Puerto Rico do not focus primarily on heritage language but rather English, the language associated with the economic elite and colonialism. Since the mid-1940s, when Puerto Rico, a former Spanish colony and current US colony, gained the franchise to vote for local leadership, Spanish has been the official language of public primary and secondary education. According to the most recent census data there are 3.2 million Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico with 45 per cent living in poverty. In addition, over 80 per cent of the population claims not to speak English 'very well' and 96 per cent of islanders identify as Spanish speakers (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Despite Spanish being the language of primary and secondary public education and the population at large, English fluency is required for matriculation into the island's public university system (Bischoff, 2017). In effect, for the 80 per cent of students who cannot afford to attend elite private primary and secondary CS where instruction is in English, with literacy in academic English being essential, English has become a barrier to higher public education in Puerto Rico.

In the US, and by extension its colonies like Puerto Rico, a university education is crucial to access material resources and thus improved living conditions. Our research demonstrates that even when the colonised have access to education in the heritage language, CS developed for and by the elites in the colonial language can lead to inequalities (Bischoff, 2017). This suggests

that when we look to CS as a resource for implementing policy, we must ensure that inequality is not exacerbated by privileging one language over another with regards to access to material goods and material wealth via education in one language rather than another. This raises important questions regarding the seemingly contradictory ideologies of 'language as a human right' articulated by UNESCO and 'language as a commodity' articulated by the World Trade Organisation via the Global Agreement on Trade and Services. As development organisations and state schools consider potential partnerships with CS, it is important to remember that CS do not follow a standard model. They reflect different attitudes toward language and literacy, which fall within the spectrum of language as a human right or commodity.

### Community-based approach to literacy

The three case studies can illuminate different attitudes toward the role of literacy in language and culture education. Literacy has received increased attention and while there is more data on students' reading levels, there is still much that is unknown (Wagner, 2010, 2014; Gove & Wetterberg, 2011; UNESCO, 2015). For this discussion, the purpose is not to put forth another definition of literacy. Rather it is to encourage proponents of community-based and grassroots approaches to also include the community members' definition of literacy, their perception of literacy, the value they place on literacy, and the ways in which they experience it in their lives in order to align our research and literacy-based activities with the community's needs.

In the case of the Mon CS, the teachers shared that, in Mon culture, they have a saying: 'If the literature/writing is lost, the nationality will become extinct.' They consider literacy as something deeply embedded in their culture and without it their culture will disappear. By learning about this, the community leaders' motivations for providing mother tongue instruction and the value they place on learning how to read and write become more transparent. Rather than assuming that the community shares a positive view of literacy and education, we can come to a mutual understanding that literacy is indeed a shared goal of the state and minority groups. With this information, we could say that the Mon community shares a similar view of literacy as the state-sponsored schools in Fort Wayne. We could propose to our state-sponsored schools to collaborate with the Mon CS to support the academic and personal growth of the Mon students. This collaboration, when it takes place, would become an example of partnerships for the goals (SDG 17) that address SDGs 3, 4, and 16.

10. Due to economy of space and a much larger body of literature on the impact of colonial languages this section is brief. See Bischoff (2017) and references therein for an in-depth discussion of these issues.

## Areas for further research and action

Despite the positive attitude toward multilingual education, implementing it continues to pose challenges for governments, communities and schools. The current challenges imply that state-sponsored schools cannot carry the full responsibility of providing multilingual quality education. CS have the potential to further support state-sponsored schools and achieve common goals. Below we identify research priorities and related actions that enable CS to become more active partners in development and thus become what Kagan et al. (2017) refer to as *institutionalised*, which we interpret to mean stabilised and formalised within community and governmental structures and *institutions* in a positive way that fosters, promotes and ensures longevity for CS.

### Identify, acknowledge and engage CS

Each country and community may already have existing CS. Identifying the CS in a community and their characteristics is the first step in expanding the number of potential partners in education.

- Who are the founders, teachers, parents and students at the school?
- What is the motivation behind the establishment of the school?
- What kind of curriculum have they created or adopted?

Answers to these questions reveal the priorities and culture of the school. The manner in which governments and state-sponsored schools engage CS will vary, but it will require that all of the stakeholders continuously build trust among themselves. One way to do this is to acknowledge that CS are legitimate forms of education and avenues of learning or, in the words of Hitchins Chik et al. (2017), *work to institutionalise them*.

### Establish ‘bridges’ between the non-formal and formal education sectors

In addition to language teaching, CS provide an important space for teachers, parents and students to express their culture and identity. State-sponsored schools that value multilingualism and strive to build inclusive communities could form bridge programmes that will encourage state-sponsored schools to collaborate with CS. These bridge programmes can assist in identifying students’ needs, academic as well as personal, and provide services such as tutoring and socio-emotional support.

### Study the pedagogy of teachers at CS

Teachers at CS are often volunteers who come from the community. They may not have received sufficient training on language teaching and strategies for improving student learning. At the same time, their ways of teaching might illuminate other possibilities

for how to teach in their local language. By learning more about how teachers at CS teach and interact with students, we could develop a comprehensive understanding of what is working and not working in our current practices related to mother tongue-based multilingual education.

### Promote local languages at ‘elite’ schools

Several participants at the 12th Language and Development Conference argued that local languages should share the same prestige as global languages. Mother tongue-based education has arguably given local languages more prestige and has validated the identity and culture of community members who share the same language. Yet local languages are not perceived as being highly valuable since they are used in the informal economy and not in the global economy. The idea that local languages are valuable would need to go beyond a focus on formal speech and writing through the implementation of mother tongue-based education only for speakers of ethnic and minority languages; it should also extend to the economic elite, including elite schools and higher education where speakers of dominant languages would learn ethnic and minority languages. In other words, development would have to be bi/multidirectional as opposed to unidirectional (i.e. the expected flow of social mobility is from poor to rich and lower to upper class). The intention is to make the development process more equitable.

## Conclusion

The political and social climate as well as the relationships between community members will affect how effectively CS can take shape and become active partners in achieving the SDGs. Although the US has yet to fully tap into the potential of CS, it has at least given them the freedom to exist and conduct their activities without much supervision or interference. The three case studies reveal promising opportunities for CS to provide education in ways that state-sponsored schools cannot. This suggests that community-based and grassroots approaches are as necessary as formal and state-supported efforts toward local and global development. Furthermore, as language becomes more visible and prioritised in the 2030 Agenda, agents of change, whether they are part of the development sector, academia or government agencies, should consider the ways in which terminologies, such as developed or developing countries and high-, middle- and low-income economies, mask the realities that are found at the community level. Certainly, the US has many privileges and appears more developed economically compared to low-income countries. However, there are also places in the US that experience poverty and lack quality education, among other problems. Our awareness of the power of language to construct reality would have to permeate our discourse on the interaction between

language and development. In affirming our diversity as a global community, we need not sacrifice our unity. After all, unity is an essential condition for sustainable development.

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## 7. LILIEMA: Language-independent literacies for inclusive education in multilingual areas

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### Abstract

This chapter introduces the innovative educational programme LILIEMA, a repertoire-based and language-independent method for achieving and nurturing culturally anchored literacy in multilingual contexts. Unique in kind, LILIEMA is the first programme that introduces literacy not based on a particular language but by drawing on the entire repertoire of learners present in the classroom. The flexible and adaptive design principle underpinning the method is inspired by multilingual oral and written communicative practices that are widespread throughout West Africa. LILIEMA has been jointly created, piloted and further developed by us – a team of teachers, trainers, researchers and community members from the Global South and the Global North. We introduce the motivations for developing LILIEMA, present the syllabus and teaching materials of the method and describe its implementation in the Casamance region in southern Senegal, drawing on examples from LILIEMA classrooms. We end the chapter by making a case for its potential to contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in the domain of education in multilingual settings characterised by mobility and migration.

### Introduction: The case for language-independent literacies

#### Paradoxes of literacy

In most African countries, literacy is characterised by a paradox: the formal education system, based on the teaching of the official languages of colonial provenance, is struggling and plagued by stagnating enrolment and high dropout rates. In Senegal, the country in the focus of this chapter, 81 per cent of children are enrolled in primary school, but only 51 per cent complete the primary cycle (UNESCO, 2016a). Additionally, even learners who complete primary education are frequently unable to read and write or lose the literacy and language skills acquired at school because they have little occasion to use them in their daily lives. French, the official language of the country and sole medium of instruction in the majority of state schools, is only needed for formal employment, which is an option for a minority of the population (World Bank, 2018).

Thus, the school system is based on a language and associated knowledge system which are irrelevant for most learners, while not providing them with the skills they require to succeed. Because of the linguistic and cultural obstacles learners face at school, even those that strive for formal employment are ill prepared for participation in the formal economic sector.

This paradox is of long date and widely recognised (Brock-Utne & Skattum, 2009; Ouane & Glanz, 2010; Ouane, 2003; Wolff, 2016; Brock-Utne & Hopson, 2005; Alexander, 2008) and has therefore yielded numerous calls for mother tongue-based multilingual education (for instance Ouane & Glanz, 2010). As a result, in some areas of Senegal, languages with larger speaker bases and recognised as national languages,<sup>1</sup> such as Wolof, Pulaar and Seereer, are taught to some extent in their standardised varieties in primary schools, although their use remains limited in scope and has low uptake. This situation mirrors that of local languages in many African countries, regardless of their status as being recognised as national languages or not. The reasons for the limited attraction of national and local language education are multiple; a central dilemma remains that local language education proposes a linguistic solution to problems of a political nature (Mufwene, this volume). As long as there is no real space for local languages in the highest echelons of the political system, formal economy and state education sector, learners and parents will remain committed to the language that allows full participation in these domains, however elusive it may be for them or their children to access them. For most of Sub-Saharan Africa, this language is the official language of the country, of colonial origin.

Another problem is often overlooked: the discussion around mother tongue education is based on the assumption that the respective languages exist as objects ready to be used in education, and that more or less homogeneous language areas where particular languages can be implemented can be identified. In reality, local language education relies on the teaching of an often fictional standard variety which either is nobody's 'mother tongue' or is only the 'mother tongue' of the fraction of a larger and internally diverse linguistic group, thus alienating all those speaking varieties more distant from the selected one. This factor is compounded

1. In the case of Senegal, the Senegalese Constitution names six languages as 'national languages': Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke and Wolof. It also recognises 'any other national language to be codified'.

by the important roles played by standard varieties in social selection. All epistemes of education in Western-inspired formal education rely on elite closure being achieved, alongside other means, through the creation of a standard language that is intended to be mastered by few. Even in monolingual environments, becoming the native speaker and writer of a standard language is a time-consuming and resource-intensive process. It is naïve to expect graduates of the under-resourced African education systems to master even one standard language culture – let alone several – when this goal is not achieved for one language in many resource-rich Western contexts. In this respect, a cynical interpretation of the *status quo* is to see African education systems, often analysed as flailing, as actually fulfilling their role of maintaining national elites through their adherence to official languages. Furthermore, the official languages are often not taught as foreign languages but introduced as if they were languages that learners already count in their repertoires, which is only the case for urban elites.

Additionally, and importantly, there are no homogeneous language areas on the African continent. Mobility, migration and social exchange beyond imaginary linguistic borders, and often across the colonially imposed borders of African states, are an old and deeply engrained African reality (Lüpke & Storch, 2013). Selecting any language would always exclude fostered children, in-married women (i.e. women who enter this community from another one, through marriage), economic migrants, civil servants posted outside their areas of origins, refugees, and many others. Larger languages, which have a realistic chance of maintaining standard language cultures, are often associated with colonial expansion and owe their standardised versions to colonial activities (regarding Wolof in Senegal, see McLaughlin 2008a, 2008b), so are similarly ambivalent in terms of instruments of oppression vs. instruments of wider communication as the official languages.

This situation is exacerbated in highly multilingual settings. In Africa, not only urban areas are highly multilingual. Rural multilingual areas, in which languages are nominally confined to villages or small geographic areas but where multilingualism is intense, are widespread, although under-researched and underrepresented in public imagination (Cobbinah, 2019; Di Carlo, 2018; Di Carlo & Good, 2017; Good & Di Carlo, 2019; Good et al., 2019; Goodchild, 2019; Lüpke, 2016b, 2017, 2018c; Lüpke & Watson (2020); Weidl, 2018). In many multilingual areas, exographic writing practices (i.e. writing in (a) different, typically larger, language(s) than the one(s) used orally) have a long tradition, because writing needs to transcend the scope of the local and connect writers and readers over great distances, therefore necessarily crossing language boundaries in the case of locally confined languages (Lüpke, 2011; Lüpke & Bao-Diop, 2014; Lüpke, 2018a).

Parents and learners therefore have many compelling reasons, the prestige of the official languages notwithstanding, to reject education in local languages. These reasons need to be understood and respected as rational and informed decisions in the light of sociolinguistic settings whose complexities are often underestimated by outsiders (see Anderson & Ansah, 2015; Barasa, 2015; Gafaranga & Torras, 2016), rather than being misunderstood as misguided incarnations of a linguistic inferiority complex alone.

## Western solutions for African problems?

There is unanimity in scholarly research in diagnosing these factors as the ones that turn inclusive language planning in Africa into a seemingly insurmountable challenge. There is now also a large body of research on the colonial origins of ethnolinguistic groups and their associated imaginary territories, on the birth of standardisation efforts in Africa at a time when the romantic idea of the ethnolinguistic nation state had its heyday in Europe, by European missionaries and colonial linguists, on the resulting linguistic misappraisal of sociolinguistic settings and on the exclusion of speakers of non-standard varieties (Blommaert, 2004, 2010, 2011; Lane et al., 2017; Lüpke & Storch, 2013).

Education planners are often not reached by this body of research in sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics, but remain subject to unquestioned language ideologies that create a favourable bias towards standardisation. At the same time, advances in language planning have been stopped in their tracks by the road block present in the dominant imagination of multilingual education as language-based, and hence of conceptualising multilingualism as a multitude of monolingualisms, now widely criticised in socio- and applied linguistics (Cummins, 2007, 2008; García & Wei, 2014; Heller, 2007).

Language-based approaches to multilingual education turn multilingualism, especially in small languages, into a burden and are entirely unsuited to maintaining linguistic diversity. This holds for the richest nation-states, which struggle adequately to resource all nationally recognised languages, even if they are as wealthy as Switzerland and only count four languages of education. It is simply an illusion that a language-based approach will be implemented in the foreseeable future in African countries such as Senegal, with more than 30 languages, or Nigeria, counting more than 400, alike. Introducing standard languages would necessitate a drastic standardisation and reduction of the number of languages and varieties prior to the implementation of such a programme, a measure that would give room to enormous political conflict and would result in the ironic effect that nobody's 'mother tongue' would be taught – a situation very similar to the one holding at the moment.

It appears that Western solutions of language management (relying either on the exclusive use of one standard language or on the, equally problematic, co-existence of a small number of standard languages) are simply inadequate for the situations of high linguistic diversity that hold on the African continent and in other areas worldwide that have remained at the margins of European imperial linguistic interventions (Lüpke, 2017, 2018c).

### The true dilemma: Western solutions for what is not an African problem

If multilingualism remains a problem that needs to be regulated through costly means in the West, it seems more promising to look to Africa itself for solutions for what perhaps is not even a problem in indigenous practice.

The first step of such an endeavour needs to be an investigation of African writing practices in languages other than the official ones. In contrast to widely held assumptions, Africans do read and write, but often in forms of literacy that are not recognised as such by linguists and education planners or even visible to them, and that are also discounted by the readers and writers themselves. The grassroots literacies Africans practise across the continent are old, such as the writing of African languages in Arabic characters (also called Ajami, or for Wolof, Wolofal) for personal literacy, religious and literary purposes; or new, such as the writing of Facebook posts, text messages, graffiti and signage in the linguistic landscapes using the Latin alphabet. What these practices have in common is that they are as mono- or multilingual as their writers and readers. This flexibility entails that writers do not uphold strict boundaries between languages, as done in standardised writing practice. Repertoire-based writing is similar to fluid oral language use described as 'translanguaging' (García & Li, 2014).

Language-independent or repertoire-based literacies are well known to scholars of literacy and multilingualism. In these fields, a growing body of research investigates the fluid and adaptive nature of West African grassroots writing, both in Ajami schools of religious and literary writing and in informal writing practised on mobile phones and social media (for case studies on Senegal, see Lexander & Alcón (forthcoming); Lexander, 2010; Lüpke & Bao-Diop, 2014; Lüpke, 2018a; McLaughlin, 2014, forthcoming). Oral and reading translanguaging is being promoted in South Africa as a means of inclusive communication flanking the standard languages of higher education (Childs, 2016; Heugh, 2015; Makalela, 2015; Probyn, 2015; Sefotho & Makalela, 2017).

In the subsequent parts of this chapter, we describe the setting, research and writing practices that inspired LILIEMA, particularly in Casamance, Senegal; and consider why the established approaches to education described above are not appropriate there. We then go on to describe the LILIEMA method, syllabus and materials in more detail, including examples and a consideration of why key choices have been made. Finally, we discuss how language-independent literacies, such as that championed by LILIEMA, can contribute to sustainable development, and identify areas for further research and action.

### The LILIEMA model of language-independent literacies

#### The setting, research and writing practices that inspired LILIEMA

Inspired by existing African grassroots literacies, we propose the LILIEMA<sup>2</sup> model to complement standard language-base approaches to literacy. The case study discussed here is situated in the Lower Casamance region of Senegal. Located in the South of Senegal, the natural region of Casamance comprises the three provinces of Ziguinchor, Kolda and Sédiou. The area has 1,664,000 inhabitants on a surface area of over 11,000 square miles (RGPHAE, 2014) speaking approximately 30 languages. The Casamance is separated from the rest of Senegal by the country of The Gambia, and shares another border with Guinea-Bissau. It forms part of a zone very different from the north of Senegal for climatic, historical, political and cultural reasons that has suffered from a longstanding secessionist conflict led by the MFDC (Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques) demanding the independence of this region since 1982 (WANEP, 2015). In particular the Lower Casamance area that forms the province of Ziguinchor is characterised by:

- its status as a cross-border region shaped by three different colonial powers, and a legacy of three different official languages (French in Senegal, English in The Gambia, and Portuguese in Guinea Bissau)
- its high concentration of frontier communities, that is, of small-scale, clan- and family-based settlements spanning national and linguistic borders and populated by inhabitants with high mobility and intense social ties to neighbouring villages and regions
- its high incidence of internal and external migration, for reasons ranging from social exchanges, child fostering and marriage exchanges to economic mobility and seeking refuge from conflict (the Casamance conflict and the Guinea Bissau independence war being the most recent).

2. The acronym LILIEMA stands for language-independent literacies for inclusive education in multilingual areas. Its French equivalent is *libre pratique de l'écrit pour une éducation inclusive dans les zones plurilingues*.

Many of the smaller languages of the area have only one village or a group of villages as their nominal home base; these languages include the clusters of Bainounk, many Joola, and Bayot languages. These and larger languages and language clusters such as Balant, Mankanya, Manjak, Pepel and Pulaar co-exist with a Portuguese-based Creole (Kriolu), Wolof and Mandinka, which are also used as languages of wider communication. Repertoires span closely and remotely related languages of the Atlantic family, but also include genealogically unrelated languages (see Lüpke et al., 2018 for details). Every inhabitant of Casamance is multilingual, either through internal and external migration and the languages acquired during personal trajectories, or because of deeply rooted social exchanges resulting in small-scale multilingualism (Cobbinah et al., 2016; Lüpke, 2016a, 2016b, 2018b). Marriage links often transcend linguistic and national borders, child fostering is widespread and brings children with very different linguistic repertoires together in one household, and ritual, economic and religious mobility is pervasive.

Formulating an efficient and inclusive language policy for multilingual areas like Casamance poses an insurmountable challenge for language-based approaches. It is unrealistic to standardise the region's many languages, develop mother tongue teaching materials, train teachers, create a stable learning environment and provide the literacy materials and written environment needed to make literacy sustainable for the many small languages with speaker numbers ranging in the hundreds or thousands. SIL, the only major language development actor in the region, has withdrawn literacy activities from the area. Any language choice would result in the exclusion of a part of the local population: if the patrimonial language<sup>3</sup> of a place is selected, in addition to the high costs for a small target group, many of its inhabitants will be excluded, since they do not speak this language, do not identify with it, or are still learning it. If a larger language is chosen, the local languages become invisible, and local culture is completely marginalised. In the area, opinions are divided on which indigenous languages could be used in mother tongue teaching: while the most liberal respondents are open to teaching in Wolof, there is also vocal opposition

to this choice, since it invokes the threats of northern Senegalese domination and Wolofisation that have played a central role in the Casamance conflict. In addition, and as observed in other African contexts, parents and learners often make rhetorical commitments to initiatives involving literacy in indigenous languages but do not follow suit in practice, because proficiency and literacy in the official language are seen as the main learning goals of formal education, for the reasons outlined in the first part of the introduction, above.

In response to this complex situation, and in a team of trainers, teachers and learners from the Global South and North in the Crossroads project, we jointly developed the LILIEMA method or *l'alphabet sans frontières* (the alphabet without borders). LILIEMA stems from the transcription practices in the Crossroads project,<sup>4</sup> during which a team of multilingual local transcribers made thick transcriptions of multilingual speech data<sup>5</sup> from three neighbouring villages in the Lower Casamance, using the official alphabet for Senegalese languages. We decided on a language-independent transcription model rather than using the standard orthographies for those named languages for which these are available, because this model mirrors the actual existing grassroots literacies of Senegal. Our transcription model, just like grassroots literacy practice, retains the variability present in speech, which is erased through standard-based transcriptions, thus eliminating the variation that offers insight into socially motivated variation in oral language use and that reflects speakers' indexical choices in speaking and writing. Most language-independent grassroots writing in Senegal is based on French as the lead language, i.e. it employs French orthographic conventions for the writing of local languages. Out of respect for Senegalese language policies we replaced French lead-language writing in which most of this informal writing takes place with a language-independent strategy using the official alphabet of Senegal. The Senegalese alphabet shares many characters and sound-grapheme associations with the official alphabets for neighbouring countries and therefore has the added advantage of overcoming colonial language boundaries which are perpetuated in informal lead-language writing in the ex-colonial languages.

3. Named languages are connected to particular places as their territorial languages (Blommaert, 2010), often as the language(s) associated with the remembered (in virilocal societies, male) founder, and serving to socially index this particular affiliation with a place. Not all the inhabitants of a place are ideologically represented according to this logic, termed 'patrimonial language ideology' by Lüpke (2018b). Strangers remain linked to their remembered place of origin, and in-married women (i.e. who have entered this community from another one, through marriage) and fostered children (and formerly, slaves and captives) from outside the patrimonial language area are likewise excluded or subsumed under the identity of the male head of the family.
4. The Leverhulme Research Leadership Award Project 'At the Crossroads – investigating the unexplored side of multilingualism', led by Friederike Lüpke, investigated rural multilingualism in three villages in the Lower Casamance. See [www.soascrossroads.org](http://www.soascrossroads.org) for details of this project.
5. Inspired by Geertz (1973), thick transcriptions here mean fine-grained, non-standardised transcriptions of multi-participant conversations, complemented by data on self-reported repertoires and transcribers', speech participants' and researchers' perspectives on the circumstances, motivations, and intentions relevant for the interaction.

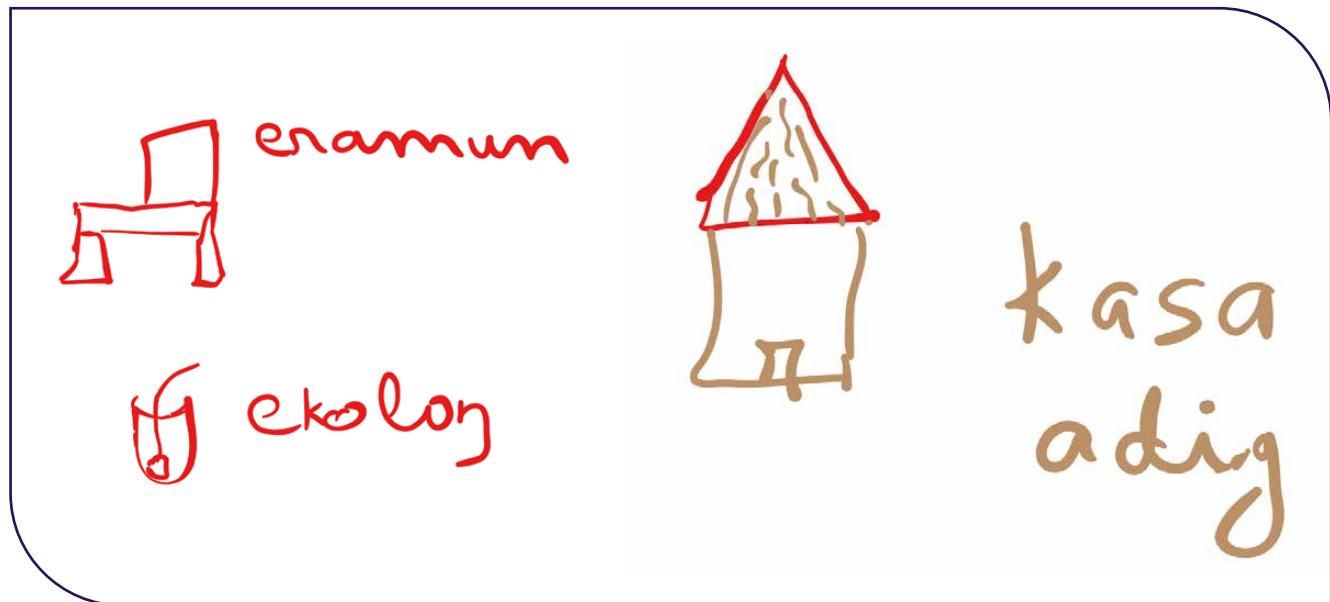
LILIEMA is a complementary educational programme that valorises local knowledge, particularly those parts of learners' repertoires that are not represented in the formal school curriculum or in fact anywhere in the public sphere, while also including larger languages. In the highly multilingual context of Casamance, we do not focus on literacy in a particular language, as this would turn multilingualism into a burden, exclude many learners, and would not connect to the social literacy practices used informally. Grass-roots writing spans writers' multilingual repertoires, since they connect with interlocutors who speak and write different languages, often not separating codes but using appropriate linguistic resources in translanguaging fashion.

Acknowledging this flexible nature of African multilingual writing, LILIEMA is based on the teaching of sound-letter associations that can be applied to entire repertoires rather than being taught for a particular language. It

allows inclusive literacy teaching in areas where participants are highly multilingual, particularly in small, non-standardised languages. Just like spoken discourse, which oscillates between more and less mono- and multilingual contexts of interaction, and between code interaction and fusion, LILIEMA allows the maintenance and transcendence of separate codes in writing. This adaptivity makes it ideally suited for an educational programme that sees literacy as a social practice that has direct relevance for readers' and writers' culturally anchored literacy needs, in line with UNESCO's vision of literacy (UNESCO, 2016b).

Figure 1 shows an illustration of the method. The drawings to the left represent a chair (*eramun*) and a well (*ekolor*), words shared by a number of Joola languages.<sup>6</sup> The drawing of a house to the right features the words for 'house' in Baïnouk Gujaher (*adig*) and Kriolu (*kasa*).

**Figure 1:** LILIEMA classroom examples illustrating monolingual (left, in Joola) and multilingual uses (right, in Kriolu and Baïnouk Gujaher) of the method



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6. Joola languages form dialect linkages that are often only minimally differentiated in a number of emblematic areas of phonetics and lexicon, another compelling reason for a 'translanguaging' approach to literacy that does not build separate literacies for them but allows the flexible expression of socially significant sameness and difference in writing.

LILIEMA is not conceived as a literacy programme for illiterate learners. Aiming local language literacy campaigns mainly at illiterate learners has turned them into *de facto* second tier programmes not attractive to writers of the official languages, and therefore, our intention is to develop an inclusive cultural enrichment programme for all learners.

LILIEMA classes are taught in two levels: Level 1 for beginners, and Level 2 for learners with previous experience of the method. LILIEMA learning goals respect the variable multilingual nature of every-day interaction and are based on the attested purposes of existing grass-roots literacies throughout Africa.

- Level 1: At the end of Level 1, learners will be able to read and write personal names and words for instance for shopping lists and inventories, numbers, phone numbers, names and short phrases.
- Level 2: At the end of Level 2, learners will be able to read and write personal messages and texts (for instance text chat messages, Facebook posts and letters). They will be able to do simple book-keeping, write personal notes and compose longer texts like the description of local events and procedural texts capturing local knowledge as well as stories.

Currently, we are preparing follow-up activities for locations in which several LILIEMA courses have taken place. In order to allow course participants to practise their skills and create tangible and sustainable outputs of relevance for local contexts, we are organising a number of study days around topics of interest, for example on local history and recipes for food and soap preparation. These study days will culminate in the production of booklets that will be circulated in all the villages where classes have been held.

### The LILIEMA method in detail

LILIEMA is based on sound-letter correspondences codified in the official Alphabet of National Languages of Senegal, which is a phonetically based alphabet designed to be applied across all Senegalese national languages (with very minor variations to account for certain phonological differences). Rather than teaching this alphabet based on a specific language, as in all mother tongue literacy programmes, LILIEMA introduces the sound values of letters based on examples from all languages present in the classroom. LILIEMA learners learn to recognise letters and their sound values and to read and write words and short texts not just in one language, but in all the languages in their repertoires. LILIEMA is based on official alphabets, but not on official orthographies. It does not introduce a standard version of a language or insist on standard spellings. Variation is tolerated, and it is expected that conventions will develop through use over time, as they have in indigenous writing in other contexts in Africa, for instance in Ajami writing or digital writing practices.

LILIEMA was piloted, in 2017–18, in two villages in the Lower Casamance area of Senegal and since then has been taught in eight successful courses in four different villages in 2019–20. All classes have been developed and taught by community members familiar with the multilingual environments of their villages, under the leadership of the authors – linguists, local trainers and supervisors with extensive experience as multilingual transcribers for the Crossroads project. Teachers from all course sites participated in several training workshops. During the first workshop in January 2017, they learned the official alphabet of Senegal, experienced language-independent writing and developed their own learning resources. During the second workshop in November 2017, and based on the first teaching experiences, the two course levels and their syllabi and progression were determined, and worksheets for both levels were created. In 2019, based on feedback and evaluations of the pilots, we revised the method, including the syllabus and teaching materials and trained additional teachers. An association has been founded and partnerships with the Baïnouk cultural organisation BOREPAB and the Université Assane Seck in Ziguinchor have been set up. BOREPAB was instrumental in the codification of Baïnouk, recognised since 2005 as a national language of Senegal. Baïnouk speakers are seen as a single ethnic group at national level, but the different Baïnouk languages, which are not mutually intelligible, reflect the internal heterogeneity of this group. In the codification document, which needed to demonstrate that the language to be codified is to be written in the national alphabet, BOREPAB members therefore presented one text written in three different Baïnouk languages. With LILIEMA, there is now a teaching method available that reflects this internal diversity along with the different multilingual environments in which Baïnouk languages are spoken.

### Syllabus and teaching materials

Initially, the two LILIEMA course levels each consisted of 38 course units. In the revised programme, both levels are taught in ten course units (see Table 1) which are taught over ten to 15 lessons, organised in a way that is adapted to the progress and availability of participants and scheduled to take place two to three times per week. This new timetable allows for flexibility regarding social obligations of participants and is adapted to the seasonal flow of activities. Teaching is scheduled during the dry season, when there are fewer agricultural activities, and avoids times of important (religious) ceremonies and shared social obligations.

The sequence of letters is independent of sound or syllable frequencies in particular languages and does not introduce letters with the same sound values in French first, because of the multilingual character of the method and the different sound-grapheme associations of the three official languages (French, Portuguese, and English) used in the cross-border region where LILIEMA is being taught.

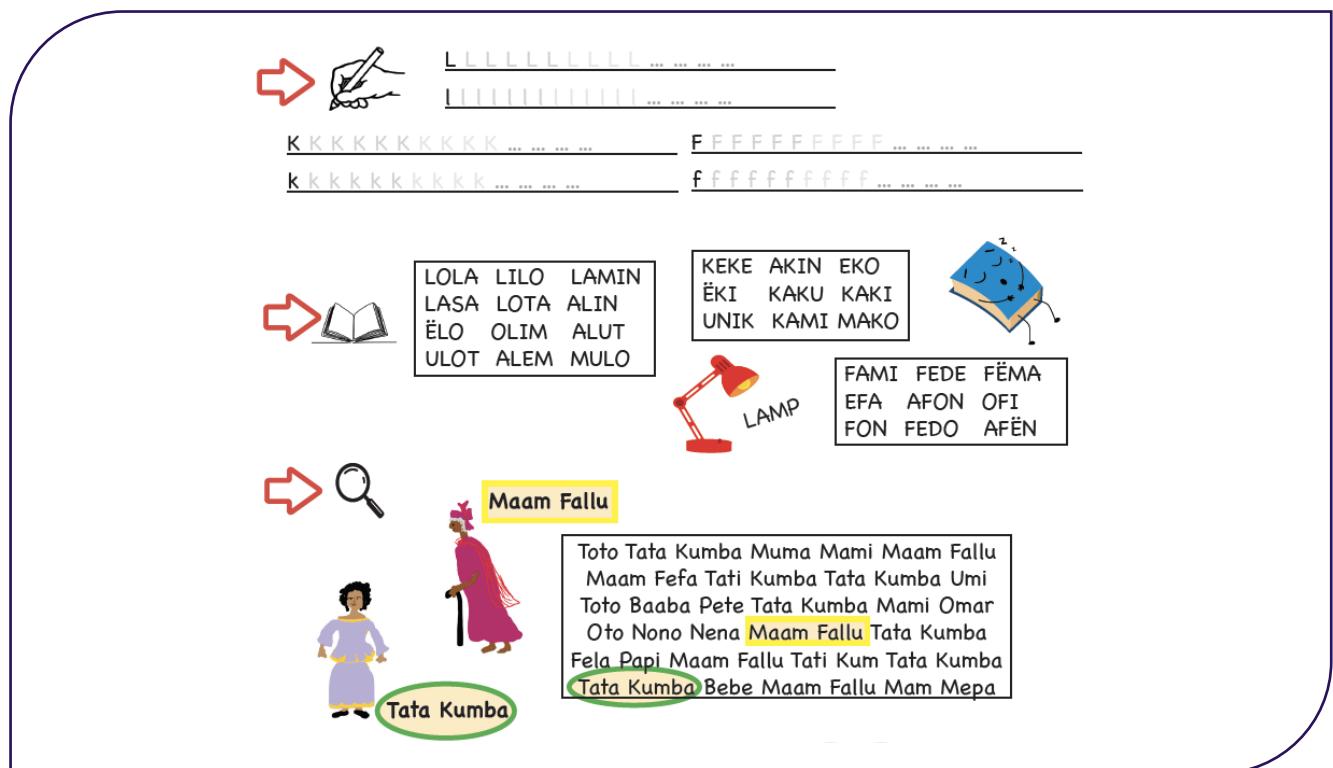
Not all phonological contrasts of the languages covered in the pilot so far are represented, nor is this intended, as LILIEMA teaches literacy through an alphabet, not through phonetic or phonological transcription (see Lüpke, 2011). However, if desired by learners, it is possible at any time to use symbols used for particular languages – for instance <ó> used for the [+ATR]<sup>7</sup> vowel /o/ in Joola languages, or <b>, an implosive part of the alphabet for Pulaar – which are not taught as part of the syllabus so far, as the method is designed to flexibly respond to learners' repertoires and existing literacies.

Four worksheets per course unit have been created for Level 1. These worksheets introduce letters and illustrate their sound values with numerous multilingual examples. Diverse reading, writing, sorting and matching exercises are offered on the worksheets to create diverse and engaging classroom interaction. In addition, teachers work with letter and photo cards and a number of props, such as shells with letters and numbers on them to allow for a wide variety of exercise types and games. Teachers have a separate manual explaining the exercises.

**Table 1:** Progression for Level 1

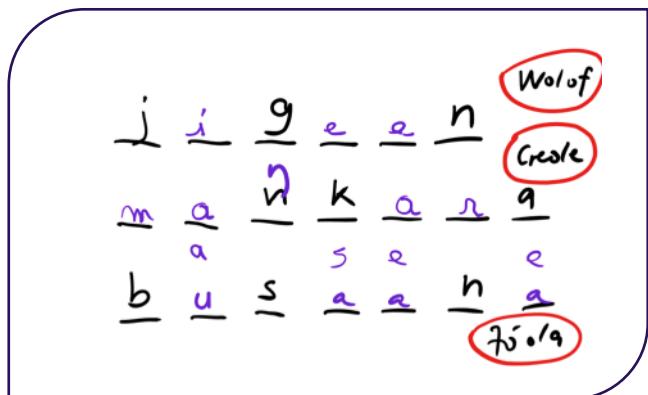
Unit	Letters introduced	Unit	Letters introduced
1	A-a; O-o; I-i; B-b	6	R-r; S-s; Y-y; Ñ-ñ
2	M-m; N-n; E-e; U-u	7	G-g; Q-q; H-h; Ð-ñ
3	J-j; C-c; P-p	8	V-v; Z-z; ſ-ſ
4	D-d; T-t; W-w; Ë-ë	9	Revision
5	L-l; K-k; F-f; X-x	10	Revision

**Figure 2:** Extract of a Level 1 worksheet



In the worksheet exercise shown in Figure 2, participants have to write the letters that are discussed in the unit. This helps the teachers observe whether everybody is able to read and write them. Examples given further down the worksheet are intended to help learners practise their reading skills and are either names or lexemes widely shared across languages (for example, *maam* for 'grandmother' and *tata* for 'aunt').

**Figure 3:** Extract of a Level 1 whiteboard gap exercise using examples in Wolof, Kriolu and Joola



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**Figure 4:** Example of the first page of a student worksheet (left) with the corresponding instructions to the teacher in French (right)

**Leçon 4**

Révision: L'enseignant(e) écrit des mots avec les lettres n, ñ et ñ dans le tableau et les élèves doivent les lire.

1. Introduction des sons Z, et ñ suivi d'une explication claire de la prononciation l'enseignant doit faire répéter aux élèves les sons.
2. Reconnaissance et prononciation : Les élèves doivent savoir lire les lettres et les reconnaître.
3. Souligner les bons mots !
4. Dictat entres les étudiants

**Jeux:** Parmi les groupes d'élèves lequel va trouver plus de groupes de mots: Chaque groupe de mots doit contenir un mot avec Z, un mot avec ñ et un mot avec W pour avoir un point.

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The examples in the whiteboard gap text exercise in Figure 3 illustrate orthographic variation. The Wolof word *jigeen* (woman) has been recorded with one spelling only. The Kriolu word *mankara* (peanut) can be spelled either with the grapheme for the alveolar nasal [n] or with the velar nasal [ŋ]. The two spelling variants reflect deep vs. shallow orthographic choices: <n> / [n] represents the input of regressive phonetic assimilation to the following velar consonant, while <ŋ> / [ŋ] constitutes the output of nasal assimilation in front of a velar consonant. This variation is not only tolerated, but actively taught in the classroom, since learners will encounter both options in the written environment. The superscript letters <a>, <s>, <e> and <e> above the word *busaana* (dugout canoe), yield the common family name Bassène (in French spelling), if replacing the corresponding letters in *busaana*.

The example lexemes of the worksheet in Figure 4 are multilingual. The phonemes /ʃ/ and /z/ and their graphemes are introduced with words from Joola Eegima (*gaejo*, to braid) and Bayot (*azunguru*, girl). For typing on portable devices, we also introduce alternative spelling avoiding special characters and using digraphs instead, e.g. <sh> for <ʃ>. The examples promoting reading skills below include several more local languages. Exercise 4, in which participants have to prepare dictations for their peers, is open to any language.

**Figure 5:** Example of the first page of a student worksheet (left) with the corresponding instructions to the teacher in French (right) – more advanced level

**1** **MUSA** + **FAATU**

M: Faatu yaa ngl ci wañ bi?	F: Waaw, maa ngi ni !
M: Looy togg tey ?	F: Dame togg Yassa Jén.
M: Na neex de !	F: Waaw, dina neex kay !
M: Maa ngi dem, Ba ci kanam.	F: Waaw baax na, demal te fiëw!

**2** +

**3**

ranodoëdk	xnosa
ramanka	liibn
aumunf	onolk
odojo	kibumoeo
aanujuf	1 alsj
fuara	ubsrgaan

**Devoir :**

1. Lisez les petits dialogues.
2. Écrivez un dialogue.
3. Trouvez les mots dans le cadre à gauche qui répond aux lettres dans le cadre à droite.

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In the worksheet in Figure 5 an exercise for more advanced students is shown. The two reading examples represent two dyadic conversations (between Musa and Faatu, who talk about food in Wolof; and Momo and Damas, discussing a football match in Bâinounk Gubëeher). In Exercise 2, learners are asked to write a dialogue, with free language choice. Exercise 3 requires learners to find letter sequences in the columns on the left-hand side that correspond to words in several languages on the right-hand column.

## Contributions of language-independent literacies to sustainable development

LILIEMA has a number of immediate and long-term benefits. For one, this method reflects the linguistic realities of learners in highly multilingual settings. Learners in these complex language ecologies are socialised into speaking different languages and lects based on their trajectories. Their unmarked discourse mode in many settings is fluid and multilingual and often described as unmarked code-switching or mixed discourse (for example by Barasa, 2015; Gafaranga & Torras, 2002). The prescriptive monolingual context of the school is at odds with these learners' lived

multilingualism. Additionally, mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes complementing the official language context can only cater for a limited number of languages and always exclude parts of the intended audience, particularly in highly multilingual contexts where many small and locally confined languages co-exist.

LILIEMA allows teachers flexibly to integrate the repertoires of all learners. By using the official alphabet of Senegal (compatible with many letters of official alphabets for indigenous languages of West Africa), LILIEMA is compatible with more resource-intensive standard literacies developed and sometimes taught for larger West African languages. LILIEMA creates cultural and linguistic awareness based on actual practices and recognises African languages, regardless of their speaker numbers, as a central form of cultural expression and an important part of intangible cultural heritage. Through this, LILIEMA increases consciousness of the lived multilingualism in heterogeneous societies. Crucially, the programme recognises and instrumentalises indigenous multilingual practice as a resource and departs from a notion of education as development from the outside. By valorising diversity, LILIEMA provides strategies for conflict prevention and resilience building in frontier societies.

LILIEMA is inspired by the acknowledged need to develop inclusive and multilingual literacy strategies (UNESCO, 2016b) in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the domain of education. LILIEMA addresses the following SDGs.

- SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

LILIEMA makes all of the languages in an individual's repertoire usable for personal literacy, thus contributing to personal autonomy and development relevant to local economy, the scope of SDG 4. By reaching women, who often marry into different linguistic environments and are excluded from formal education, and fostered children, a majority of whom are girls fostered for domestic reasons, it is central to the achievement of SDG 5. LILIEMA reaches groups excluded from language-focused literacy activities. LILIEMA uses local means and is training and employing local teachers, relevant to SDG 8. All language-centred literacy programmes struggle to cope with mobility; by reaching marginalised mobile learners, LILIEMA contributes to SDG 16.

## Suggestions for further research and action

We strongly recommend investing in and further developing the LILIEMA method as an alternative to mother tongue-based literacy in highly multilingual areas that is compatible with standard literacies but that is adaptive to every linguistic context and entirely reliant on local resources and valorising local sociocultural knowledge. LILIEMA can be transferred at low cost to other multilingual contexts in Africa and beyond.

We recommend evaluating the potential of LILIEMA as a translanguaging-based basic literacy programme in the following contexts:

- hotspots of rural multilingualism and linguistic diversity such as Western and Northwestern Cameroon, Nigeria, the Horn of Africa, the entire Upper Guinea Coast of West Africa, and South Africa
- hotspots of urban multilingualism: cities throughout Africa
- hotspots of mobility: border regions, refugee settlements and diaspora communities.

LILIEMA has the great appeal of initiating a sea-change in basic literacy while not requiring revolutionary changes in language policies or infrastructure investments of great magnitude. It is ideal for achieving inclusive, culturally anchored education in areas where resources for cost-intensive activities are not available and where language issues are not seen as central to development activities (Taylor-Leech & Benson, 2017).

Since LILIEMA teaching is designed as complementary, it remains secondary to the formal education systems, but nevertheless has the potential to create new visions for multilingualism as a resource in African societies that in turn may contribute to a radically new imagination of multilingualism and education, from the bottom up.

## Acknowledgements

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# Part 2

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**Multilingualism for quality,  
equitable and inclusive education  
– perspectives on practice  
(SDG 4: Quality education)**



## 8. Applying theory successfully: The early impact of L1 instruction on L2 literacy confirms Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis in Senegalese primary schools

Chris Darby and Jorunn Dijkstra

### Abstract

This chapter describes a longitudinal study of a pilot bilingual education programme in primary schools in Senegal, in French and Seereer, the dominant local language in the chosen region. It describes the theoretical framework underpinning the pilot based on Jim Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis, with a focus on teaching literacy in Seereer before introducing first oral French and, later, French literacy, and describes practical considerations for applying the theory *in situ*. The chapter reports that by the end of Grade 2, literacy results in both Seereer and French were significantly better in the pilot group than in the control group. Although small in scope, these findings not only support Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis, but suggest that its effect was apparent as early as the end of Grade 2.

### Introduction

One of the major challenges in introducing bilingual education can be resistance from important stakeholders. Hence the need to show the effectiveness of a bilingual approach.

When the bilingual education pilot project, EMiLe,<sup>1</sup> started in Senegal in 2009, one of the main objectives, therefore, was to document the effects of bilingual primary education. Eight private and four public schools in the region of Fatick participated, using the main national language in the area, Seereer, as the first language (L1) and French as the second language (L2).<sup>2</sup> All subjects were included in the programme. French was initially treated as a subject to be taught, and only gradually became a second language of instruction alongside Seereer. Introduction of literacy was sequential. Once all L1 letters had been introduced, L2 literacy started in Grade 2.

To document the effects of the programme, a longitudinal study was developed. Six of the pilot schools – plus six control schools following the national, monolingual programme – participated in the study. A baseline study was conducted at the beginning of Grade 1, followed by end-of-grade evaluations for three consecutive school years (Grades 1–3: Cl, CP and CE1<sup>3</sup>).

Literacy results at the end of Grade 2 (CP) merit special mention. While it may not have been a surprise that L1 literacy competencies for EMiLe pupils came out on top, what was striking was that the levels these same pupils obtained in L2 literacy, after only five months of exposure, were only slightly inferior to those achieved in their L1. Though still relatively low in absolute terms, these levels were also markedly better than those obtained in L2 by pupils in the control group, even after two years of schooling entirely in that L2. Although small in scope, these findings not only support Jim Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1981), but suggest that its effect was apparent as early as the end of Grade 2.

This chapter will describe how the EMiLe project was set up and some of the constraints and compromises that were necessary to deliver a pilot on the ground. It will go on to describe the strong theoretical framework underpinning the project's bilingual approach, especially Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis and how the longitudinal study was set up to provide a solid basis for comparing literacy results between the pilot and control groups. Finally, we present results from this pilot indicating a significant increase in literacy through this approach as early as Grade 2, and identify possible factors to explain this success, as well as areas which merit further research.

1. Projet EMiLe: The name chosen for this particular multilingual education project.
2. In this chapter, L1 is used to denote Seereer as it is the predominant language in the area of the pilot. It is both the mother tongue for a majority of the population and the established local language of the communities. Similarly, we use L2 to designate French, even though, for the vast majority of pupils, it is not even an L2 but a foreign language. However, the government of Senegal continues to refer to French as *langue seconde* (second language) and not *langue étrangère* (foreign language) for example in its teachers' guide, *Guide Élémentaire, première étape* (2012).
3. Cl: *Cours d'Initiation* (Initial Class, equivalent to Grade 1). CP: *Cours Préparatoire* (Preparatory Class, equivalent to Grade 2). CE1: *Cours Élémentaire 1* (Elementary Class 1, equivalent to Grade 3).

## Context

Like many other countries, Senegal faces growing and urgent challenges in its primary education system, now accessible to a wider and more numerous group of children. It is increasingly acknowledged that one of the most fundamental of these problems is the inadequate development of pupils' reading competency. This was recognised, for example, in both a report (Gove & Cvelich, 2010) and a summary of a workshop delivered by RTI (Focus Africa & RTI International, 2010) to the government of Senegal. The findings emerged from a small sample of 687 pupils from 50 different schools in three regions at the end of Grade 3. EGRA<sup>4</sup> tests, both in French and Wolof, were used to evaluate reading levels. These revealed worryingly low levels of success, with one in four pupils unable to decode unknown words of one or two syllables and around 17 per cent of the sample incapable of reading a single word from a very simple text.

When the findings were presented to a relatively small gathering of decision makers in Dakar, there was evidence of concern but not of surprise. In the wake of this, Lartes-Ifan,<sup>5</sup> a reputable research laboratory based at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Hewlett Foundation to continue further annual surveys to examine attainment levels. In 2015, this body published its third annual report (Jàngandoo, 2015) based on findings from over 26,000 children aged six to 14 in 10,000 homes across all 45 departmental regions in Senegal. As with the earlier RTI report, a key area of interest was reading attainment. In line with findings from the two previous years, results suggested that only about one in five of children aged six to 14 was able to read at a level commensurate with the expected minimum for a pupil at the end of Grade 3.

In the same period, a team from SIL Senegal was developing a bilingual education project called EMiLe with partners from Catholic education and regional inspectors attached to the Ministry of Education.<sup>6</sup> Two objectives of this pilot project (EMiLe, 2009) were to demonstrate the viability of full bilingual education to decision makers in Catholic education,<sup>7</sup> and also in

public education. The third objective was to help pupils to develop more of their potential and to attain noticeably higher results in examinations, all conducted in French, at the end of the primary cycle. Though the organisations involved deemed all three of these objectives to be important, this last one about success in French may prove to be the most important.

The reason for this is largely to do with a view anecdotally prevalent, especially among parents, that learning French is vital. For this group, the success or failure of their children relies on many factors, but mastery of French is a non-negotiable essential. Thus, in the phase before the launch of the EMiLe bilingual project in schools, it was common (although this project did not record examples or a more precise notion of frequency) to hear a parent say that, at the age of five, six or seven, their child already 'knew' the local language and had no need to 'waste' time at school learning how to read and write it. Teachers also had mixed views.

It was therefore crucial for EMiLe to carry out regular evaluations of pupil performance in French. This would be a key indicator alongside others, which tracked progress in the acquisition of basic skills delivered and tested in Seereer: principally mathematics, reading and writing. Seereer is the predominant local language of the regions where EMiLe was carried out and is the mother tongue for a majority of the population there. Seereer, a language of the Senegambian branch of Niger-Congo languages, is spoken by 1.2 million people in Senegal and over 30,000 in Gambia.<sup>8</sup> It is one of the original six languages officially recognised as 'national languages' by the 2001 Senegalese Constitution.

The working hypothesis was that the basic literacy skills, acquired and secured in a language familiar to the pupil as L1, i.e. Seereer in this case, would transfer quickly to a second and any subsequent language, even with a different orthography, and allow the rapid development of those same skills in other languages. This was based on work by Cummins (1999, 2005) and supported by evidence emerging from other bi- or multilingual projects. These included projects in Asia in which SIL International colleagues were working, and a similar project among the Kom population of Cameroon (Walter, 2013;<sup>9</sup> Walter & Chuo, 2012).

4. EGRA (early grade reading assessment) is an individually administered oral assessment of the most basic foundation skills for literacy acquisition in early grades, developed by RTI, an NGO. The assessment focuses on what it labels the 'three early stages of reading acquisition': emergent literacy (birth to Grade 1), decoding (beginning Grade 1) and confirmation and fluency (end of Grade 1 to end of Grade 3).
5. Lartes-Ifan is the Laboratoire de recherche sur les transformations économiques et sociales – Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire (Economic and Social Transformation Research Laboratory – Fundamental Institute of Black Africa).
6. Project funding came initially from World Vision Germany and Wycliffe Germany. Towards the end of this phase additional funding came from TrustAfrica.
7. Office National de l'Enseignement Catholique du Sénégal (ONECS). Catholic schools operate within this structure. This was one of the three partners in the EMiLe project with World Vision and SIL.
8. See [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)
9. Walter, S (2013) The Kom EGRA Report. Unpublished paper.

It is important to note that French and Seereer have different writing systems. Seereer has 43 graphemes, 13 of which have the same grapho-phonemic value as in French. This can pose a cognitive challenge for children embarking on bilingual education, which the project attempted to address in its delivery (see below).

## The EMiLe project: set up, profile and challenges

The first real stirrings were in 2009, though the project did not launch in schools until October 2013.

The region of Fatick (Figure 1) was chosen for a number of reasons. Since World Vision was a major partner, the choice was restricted to its regions of intervention, of which Fatick was one. The Fatick area is also relatively homogeneous in terms of language, with Seereer spoken by the overwhelming majority as a mother tongue, though there are several other ethnic groups present. This was confirmed by internally commissioned but unpublished research for the EMiLe project (Diouf, 2010;<sup>10</sup> Niane, 2013). That homogeneity allowed us to focus on some key aspects without having to deal with wider linguistic and cultural diversity. In addition,

although decidedly rural and with a relatively low socio-economic profile (Diouf, 2010;<sup>11</sup> Niane, 2013), the region is reasonably accessible from Dakar, the capital.

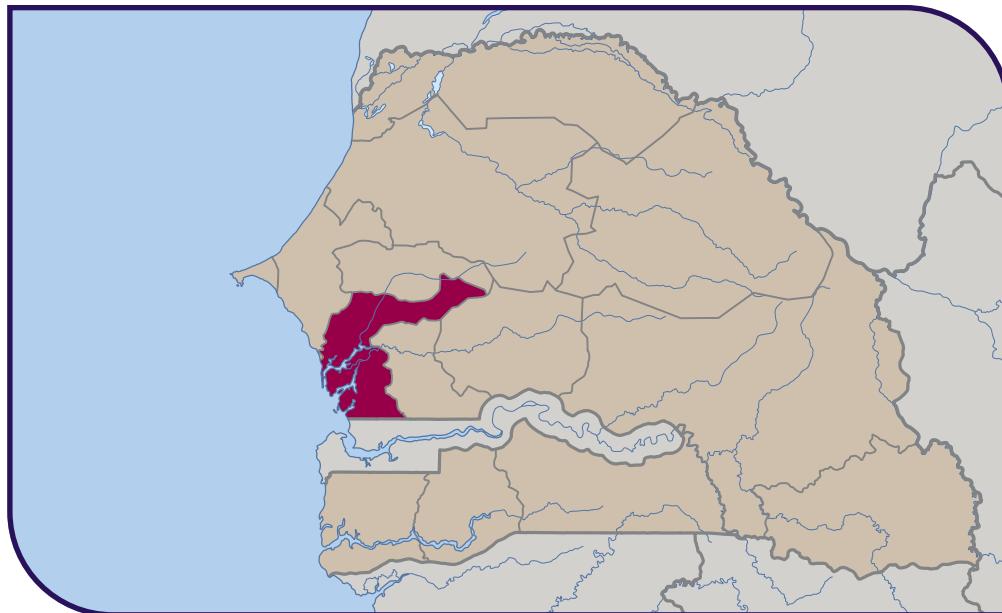
Twelve schools were chosen: eight Catholic and four public. These were in villages scattered across the region. None of the head teachers or staff had had any training in bilingual education.

Aside from the main challenges cited with regard to major stakeholders about the viability and effectiveness of bilingual approach, there were several others. These included the need for initial teacher education and ongoing teacher development in the approach, and to boost teacher competence in written Seereer (L1), a language they all spoke, but which was read by few and written by even fewer.

A pre-launch survey (Niane, 2013)<sup>12</sup> revealed that pupils had very little contact with French (L2) and very restricted access to written materials in any language. They had low motivation and low expectations of academic success.

The timetable also presented a challenge. The project took an additive approach to bilingual education with a late exit strategy (Figure 2).

**Figure 1:** Fatick region within Senegal

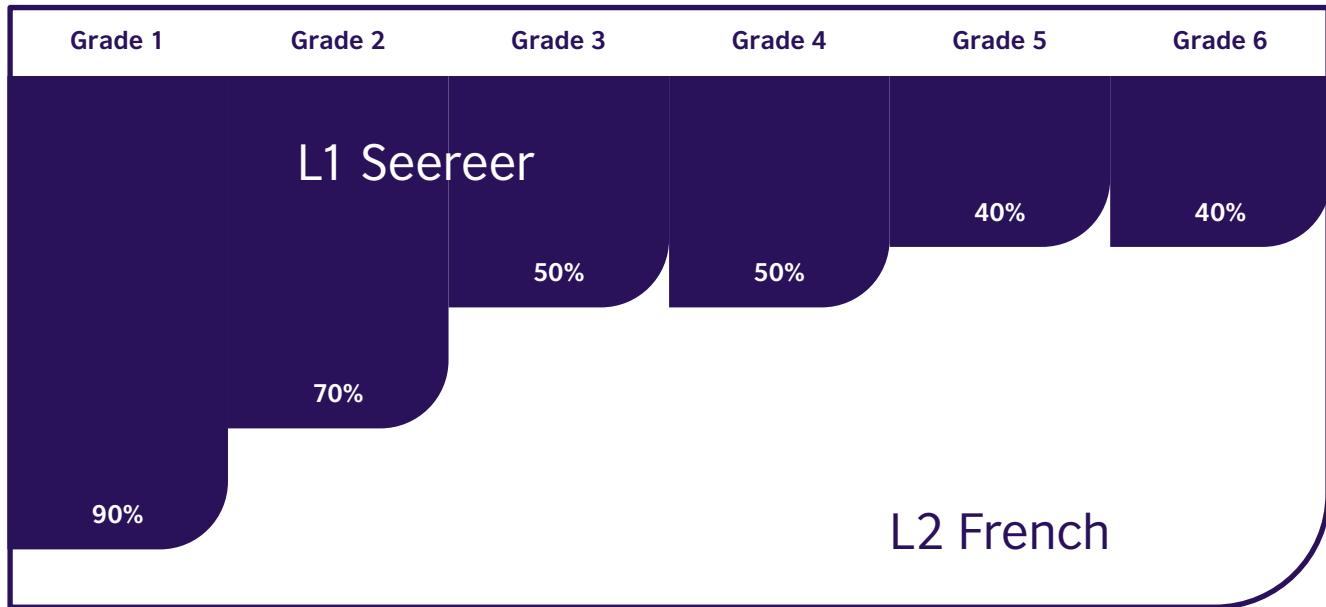


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10. Diouf, ED (2010) Rapport d'enquête sociolinguistique dans le département de Fatick au Sénégal; and Niane A (2013) Rapport d'enquête. Unpublished reports commissioned by the EMiLe project but available on request from the authors of this chapter.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

**Figure 2:** EMiLe bilingual model with late exit strategy\*

\*These target percentages for language use went beyond the teaching of L1 and L2 and applied to the overall curriculum time. Although primarily referring to the language of instruction used by the teacher, the figures also applied to pupils.

During the first six weeks, permission was granted to develop literacy skills solely in Seereer, in time slots normally allocated to French language and literacy acquisition. However, from that point there were institutional and socio-linguistic pressures to begin some French, although the project was allowed to limit this to an oral programme (with no writing or reading) in Grade 1. This was delivered through an approach using 'total physical response' whereby pupils responded by physical gestures to progressively more complex spoken stimuli in French. During the first ten weeks of this pupils were not required to speak though they had later to engage in some spoken work for the last nine weeks of the year.

## Programme development: Theoretical framework

The programme strived to develop a strong theoretical framework from research findings in order to establish solid foundations on which to develop its approach and ensure its credibility.

*[T]he relevance of research for policy is mediated through theory. [...] It is the theory rather than the individual research findings that permits the generation of predictions about program outcomes under different conditions.*

**Cummins (1999: p. 26)**

We have already cited similar project documents and results such as Walter (2013).<sup>13</sup> In addition, there were presentations, training materials and evidence from extensive field experience.<sup>14</sup> Documentary research included work on bilingual practice and education by Baker (2011) and studies on different approaches to bilingual education by Collier and Thomas (1997, 2004).

## Interdependence Hypothesis and the Common Underlying Proficiency

Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis provided a theoretical framework with regard to the area crucial to many of the stakeholders: progress in French (L2). This is how Cummins describes his hypothesis:

*To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly.*

**Cummins (1981: p. 20)**

In other words:

*[A]lthough the surface aspects (e.g., pronunciation, fluency) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages. This common underlying proficiency makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy-related proficiency from one language to another.*

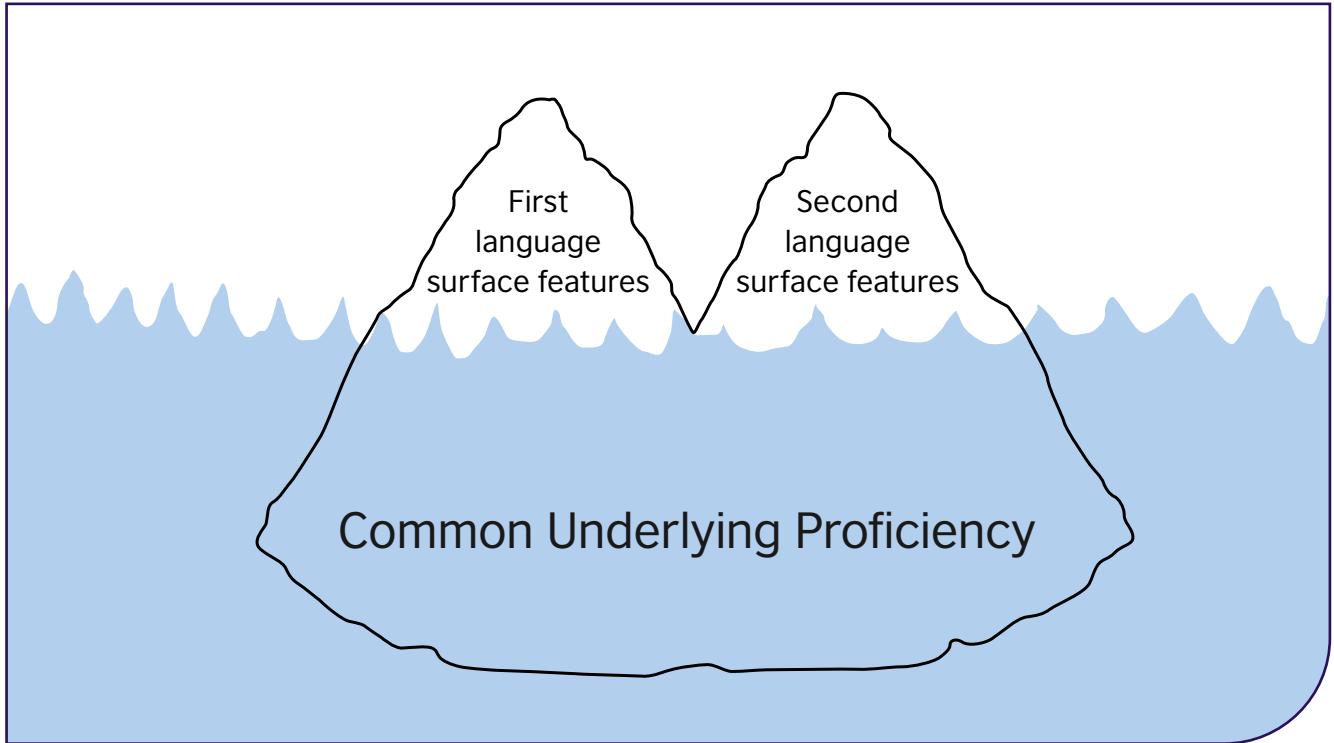
**Cummins (2005: p. 3)**

13. Walter, S (2013) The Kom EGRA Report. Unpublished paper.

14. Malone, D & Malone, S (n.d.) Unpublished materials from mother tongue-based multilingual education workshops and programmes with UNESCO and SIL.

This can be seen as a diagram in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis and Common Underlying Proficiency



Source: Cummins (1984, 2000)

This hypothetical basis suggested various components for a successful bilingual approach for EMiLe:

1. use of the L1 for initial literacy learning
2. initial concept acquisition in L1 (especially for abstract areas of learning, such as mathematics and science) for as long as possible
3. provision of adequate exposure to an appropriate level of L2 (especially oral) to allow transfer between L1 and L2 literacy to start
4. steady increase in the exposure to L2, given that national examinations in all subject areas in Grade 6 are in French
5. materials available in both L1 and L2, including a bridging primer (L1–L2) to introduce L2 literacy
6. both L1 and L2 should be taught formally as curriculum subjects but should also feature as languages of instruction throughout the primary cycle, so as to ensure:
  - a. biliteracy at the end of the cycle
  - b. maximum linguistic and cognitive/academic benefits from the positive effects of interdependence between the languages.

### Applying the Interdependence Hypothesis to sociolinguistic realities

There were practical implications to applying the hypothesis, taking account of sociolinguistic realities on the ground.

Achieving a high level of success in the French language is perceived as a good way of assuring social promotion and a better standard of living. Over and above this, the strongly prevailing view is that academic learning can only occur through the use of French. On the other hand, the Interdependence Hypothesis suggests that introduction of literacy skills needs to be sequential in the initial phase and should proceed for a sufficiently long period in order for children to benefit fully from the interdependence. In the case of EMiLe, this suggested there should be prolonged initial use of the L1 prior to heavy exposure to L2 (French). The acquisition of the underlying proficiency is seen as providing the best context for ensuring pupils' success not only in L1 literacy but also in L2 literacy.

Project colleagues agreed on a compromise, which allowed French literacy to be introduced at the start of Grade 2, before all 43 of the Seereer graphemes had been taught. The emphasis was on global acquisition of French words, greetings and basic social interaction phrases, all the while introducing the 13 graphemes with the same grapho-phonemic value in Seereer and French, and already learnt in Seereer. Thus, for the first eight weeks of Grade 2, pupils began to encounter written French. At the same time, during this term, though in a different timetabled lesson, they completed learning all of the Seereer graphemes. It was only in Term 2 that pupils began to work on combining individual graphemes/phonemes to create syllables or short words (blending) in French.

It is to be noted what this meant in terms of time allocation. EMiLe pupils worked on written French for only five hours per week for two terms. In other schools, pupils were exposed to written French throughout the school week of 25 hours and for the six terms that began in Grade 1.

## The longitudinal study

A key ingredient in the conceptualisation was the inclusion of a longitudinal study to document pupil progress.

Evaluations were administered by trained external evaluators and occurred at the start and towards the end of each school year. However, the baseline was not established until November 2014 because the first evaluation with the first cohort in Grade 1 (CI) classes was not valid, having taken place two months into the programme.

Six pilot schools and six control schools were selected (see table below). The choice of pilot schools was based on two criteria:

- having two schools in each of the three main geographical areas of intervention
- assessing half of the project schools, bearing in mind the ratio of two Catholic schools for each public school in the EMiLe project; this gave four Catholic schools and two public schools.

For each pilot school, a control school was identified, wherever possible, based on the following criteria:

- part of the same structure (Catholic or public) as the pilot school
- roughly the same socio-cultural context
- geographically as close as possible to the corresponding pilot school
- roughly the same number of classes.

15. EGMA (early grade mathematics assessment) is an instrument (developed by RTI) to evaluate basic skills in maths.

16. ARED (Association pour la Recherche en Education pour le Développement [Association for Research in Education for Development]) is an NGO working in multilingual education in Senegal.

17. Walter, S (2013) The Kom EGRA Report. Unpublished paper.

A sample of ten pupils was selected by class regardless of class size. The choice of sample was made as scientifically as possible according to a predetermined system. The elements of this system were the following.

- **Time constraints:** the need to evaluate different subject areas in the course of two mornings in each school. This was to avoid factors such as fatigue and the afternoon heat having an excessive impact on results.
- **The proportion to be evaluated:** the decision to assess at least a fifth of each class but no fewer than ten pupils. The largest class had 47 pupils and the smallest had 23 pupils.
- **Gender ratio:** taking into account the proportion of girls/boys in each class. Thus, in a class of 46, with 16 boys and 30 girls we identified three boys and seven girls for evaluation.
- **Random sampling:** from the class list we identified the first person to be evaluated. Others were chosen in relation to their numerical rank on the register with respect to this first person and taking gender into account.

The subject areas covered by the study are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Subject areas in pilot schools and control schools in the EMiLe project

Pilot schools	Control schools
Reading L1 (Seereer)	
Reading L2 (French) from Grade 2	Reading L2 (French)
Spoken L2 (French)	Spoken L2 (French)
Mathematics	Mathematics
Questionnaire about the child	Questionnaire about the child

Inspired by tools such as those used by EGRA, EGMA,<sup>15</sup> ARED,<sup>16</sup> the SIL Kom project in Cameroon (Walter, 2013)<sup>17</sup> and other documentary research, evaluation forms were developed to fit the needs and context of the EMiLe project. Thus, none of these evaluation tools is an exact reproduction of one already in existence.

The tests developed for the study contained exactly the same elements for both types of schools (pilot and control) even though the language (French or Seereer) used was different. In pilot schools Seereer was used to ensure understanding of instructions given prior to evaluation and in all areas of assessment, except in French (L2) oral. However, in control schools, Seereer and, to a lesser extent, Wolof were used to ensure understanding of instructions given prior to evaluation, while the evaluation itself was carried out in French for mathematics, reading and, of course, for French (L2) oral.

Given the additional use of Wolof, a wider lingua franca, the variation between pilot and control schools is unlikely to have favoured pupils in the pilot schools though it may, arguably, have helped some in the control schools. In addition, evaluators took pains to put pupils at ease and to ensure that pupils had a good grasp of instructions before proceeding. The use of a sample question prior to each section of each test was a further effort to reduce the effect of any such variables.

## Literacy results at end of Grade 2 and implications

Within the longitudinal study, the results in Table 2 show the mean levels of performance towards the end of Grade 2 by the first cohort. It should be stressed that EMiLe pupils had been working on written French (L2) for only five hours per week for two terms. In other schools, pupils had been exposed to written French throughout the school week from the beginning of Grade 1.

Although these results are far from satisfactory, it is not unexpected that EMiLe pupils read and comprehend Seereer (L1) better than their peers learning in the traditional system read and comprehend French (L2) – understanding an average of 14 Seereer words per minute in a list of familiar words and 19 Seereer words in a piece of text (compared to nine and 13 French words respectively for the control group). What is more interesting is that, despite much more limited contact with written French, the number of words per minute understood by EMiLe pupils in French is also higher: 12 in a list of familiar words, and 19 in reading a text. Indeed, the figures might lead one to conclude that there is relatively little difference between their reading and comprehension of French and the same skills in Seereer. However, Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis may explain the level of achievement in L2 by EMiLe pupils, though at a much earlier stage than had been anticipated by project staff.

Further indications of the above trend were confirmed by the same EMiLe pilot classes at the end of Grade 3 where there was notable progress and where the number of words read correctly per minute is significantly higher than in the control schools. It appeared that the underlying proficiency developed in Seereer (L1) was reaping even more rewards in Grade 3. See Table 3.

Meanwhile, the results of the second cohort, now reaching the end of Grade 2, can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 2:** Mean level of reading comprehension performance at the end of Grade 2 (first cohort): number of words per minute understood in a list of familiar words, and in a text; and percentage of correct answers given to two simple factual comprehension questions

May 2015: Cohort 1 End of Grade 2	N	Words per minute		Correct answers to two comprehension questions
		Familiar words	Text	
6 control classes, L2	59	9	13	58%
6 pilot (EMiLe) classes, L2	60	12	19	70%
6 pilot (EMiLe) classes, L1	60	14	19	68%

**Table 3:** Mean level of reading comprehension performance at the end of Grade 3 (first cohort): number of words per minute understood in a list of familiar words, and in a text

May 2016: Cohort 1 End of Grade 3	N	Words per minute	
		Familiar words	Text
6 control classes, L2	60	17	29
6 pilot classes, L2	60	22	45

**Table 4:** Mean level of reading comprehension performance at the end of Grade 2 (second cohort): number of words per minute understood in a list of familiar words, and in a text

May 2016: Cohort 2 End of Grade 2	N	Words per minute	
		Familiar words	Text
5 control classes, L2	50	10	18
5 pilot classes, L2	51	16	29

When compared to the previous year, although there was some improvement in text reading in the control classes, there was a more important leap forward for pilot classes. Although various factors<sup>18</sup> may have contributed to this stronger progression in reading and understanding French words and text, it would again seem reasonable to posit that the underlying proficiency is a factor, again tending to support the Interdependence Hypothesis, even at this very early stage.

Comparing Cohort 2 with Cohort 1 of the pilot classes, these figures show much stronger progression in reading and understanding French words and text. Various factors are likely to have contributed to this: the growing experience of teachers and schools; better training in the second year of the programme; motivating feedback from the previous year's results; and a pupil group who may have had a different profile.

We speculate that factors such as these may have encouraged teachers to invest with greater ability, confidence and enthusiasm in good quality literacy work in Seereer. We speculate that this combination of factors offers a credible explanation for the higher results and that, as a result, teachers were more actively creating the basis for the linguistic interdependence to function.

## Conclusion

Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to 'ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning' (United Nations, 2015). The objectives of the EMiLe project were also to provide quality education and, as we have noted, for pupils to succeed in public examinations in French at the end of the primary cycle. We have also noted the non-negotiable requirement to demonstrate to parents that these objectives, as well as that of acquiring fluent literacy skills in French, can be best achieved through a bilingual programme.

Though small in scope, the findings of the EMiLe project and of the longitudinal study tend to offer strong support for Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis, part of the project's theoretical underpinning. Indeed, the evidence provided appears to suggest that its effects can be seen as early as the end of Grade 2. The example of the EMiLe project should encourage further research on a larger scale within a similar theoretical framework.

18. Some general factors are mentioned in the next paragraph: better grasp and delivery of the new approach by EMiLe teachers, greater backing for the approach from staff, generally stronger pedagogical practice by this cohort of teachers, or greater support by parents of this cohort. While any one or combination of these may indeed have played a role, this is unlikely to be sufficient to explain this particular improvement in French across a range of classes and schools just one year later. This, especially in a community where French is rarely used or encountered to any great degree, especially by pupils of this age.

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## 9. In a world of linguistic ‘multicephalism’, what tools are needed for successful inclusive education?

Ndiémé Sow

### Abstract

This chapter is a contribution to the debate on the implementation of bi- or plurilingual education policy. It stems from a qualitative approach based on classroom observations carried out at a pilot school in the ELAN-Afrique<sup>1</sup> initiative, a programme of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), which promotes bilingual education in French and African national languages. It proposes three tools to implement inclusive education: normalising plurilingual practices in the school context; turning the obstacle of a multiplicity of languages into a resource; and evolutionary/revolutionary change in terms of both approach and content.

My main interest is the choice of the medium of instruction, which I connect to the plurilingual repertoires of primary school pupils in Ziguinchor in the region of Casamance, Senegal.

I define linguistic ‘multicephalism’ as the phenomenon whereby several languages in a single territory compete for primacy to the point that choosing a language of instruction in formal education is problematic as it implies the exclusion of all the other languages from the school territory. I argue in favour of implementing a language policy that transcends this conflict.

### Introduction and context

This chapter examines the effectiveness of an inclusive approach to sustainable education in the context of ensuring long-term quality education for all (Sustainable Development Goal 4). This involves strengthening the educational capacities of learners of both sexes and on an equal basis, by promoting learning opportunities in a plurilingual environment, particularly in Casamance.

Casamance is an especially relevant environment because of the multilingualism and multiculturalism which prevail there. The main local languages<sup>2</sup> which are used in Casamance reflect the intense mobility of the local populations. This mobility explains the expansion of Wolof in urban areas in addition to the local languages (Dreyfus & Juillard, 2001). It would seem absurd to impose a single language in formal education in this context (see also Lüpke, this volume).

This chapter is a discussion of the initial results of a study looking at the construction of plurilingual repertoires among primary school pupils in Casamance (Sow, 2016). The study was based on the observation of interactions inside the classroom in classes where teaching is bilingual in a national language and French, and classes where the teaching is traditional (i.e. monolingual, in French), and also outside the classroom, at a primary school in Ziguinchor – a pilot school in OIF’s ELAN-Afrique bilingual education programme.<sup>3</sup>

This study revealed the following.

- Although national educational language policy is to use French both as the language of instruction and as the conceptual and material source of the educational content itself, monolingualism in schools is nothing but a utopia (Ndiaye & Diakité, 2008). Other specialists discussing the main reason for the deadlock in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge at school explain that ‘one of the reasons for the decline in quality in education in Senegal is that a child who learns in a foreign language is faced with a double challenge: that of the language of instruction and that of the learning’.<sup>4</sup>

1. ELAN: Ecole et Langues Nationales en Afrique (School and National Languages in Africa).
2. I use the term ‘local language’ to refer to all languages spoken by local populations; and ‘national language’ to refer to those languages which have been codified and thus designated as a ‘national language’ according to Article 1 (Paragraph 2) of the Senegalese Constitution dated 7 January 2001: ‘The official language of the Republic of Senegal is French. The national languages are: Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke, Wolof and any other language that will be codified.’ In the context of bilingual education in Senegal, ‘national language’ almost always refers to one of these six languages named in the constitution.
3. ‘Launched in 2011, ELAN-Afrique’s goal is to promote the joint use of African languages and the French language in primary education in francophone Africa. A partnership between the OIF and the Ministries of Basic Education, or their representatives, across 12 African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, DR Congo, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Madagascar and Togo). In 2017 ELAN-Afrique counted 2,500 schools and more than 225,000 pupils all learning in bilingual classes: 35 “national” languages of instruction, in addition to French’ (IEEF, 2017).
4. Mamadou Amadou Ly, Director of ARED (Association pour la Recherche en Education pour le Développement, or Association for Research in Education for Development, an NGO working in multilingual education in Senegal), speaking at the training workshop for national education inspectors on bilingualism held in Dakar in March 2013.

- In urban areas, the policy in families with regard to language tends to be to encourage or impose the parents' first language (if it is the same for both) or Wolof/French (if the parents do not share the same first language).
- In teacher–pupil interactions, speaking comes to the rescue of writing: Jola (Fooñi variety), a local language, was used in 90 per cent of teaching and learning situations in the bilingual (French/national language medium) classes in the school, while Wolof was used in monolingual (French medium) classes. In interactions between pupils, Wolof stood out, both inside and outside the classroom (see the example in Table 1).

This utterance (Table 1) is an extract from an interaction between two Grade 3 primary school pupils. Although they were both in the same grade, one was in the bilingual French–Jola class and the other in the classic monolingual (French) system. They had lived in the same district since birth. Their use of Wolof was very frequent and almost automatic, even though these two pupils came from the same linguistic community (Jola). Our observations showed that they only spoke Jola to each other when they were on their own. Semi-structured interviews also revealed that using Wolof enabled them to be 'with it', to fit in, to remain anonymous in the crowd. This was reflected in pupils' different reasons for choosing and using Wolof in their repertoire.

- '(W) *olof ñëp a ko bÓk, ñëp a ko dégg*' = 'Wolof is for everyone, everyone understands it.'
- '(W) *olof mooy làku nandite yi*' = 'Wolof is the language of the cool kids.'
- '*So dul wax (w) olof dañ lay jëw, ak dila waññi rek*' = 'If you can't speak Wolof, people say horrible things about you and put you down.'
- '*Ñii di wax olof dañu bari, but nak man moom, joola bi mooma gënël*' = 'Many people speak Wolof, but me, I prefer Jola.'<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, this is a world of what I call intralinguistic and cross-linguistic multicephalism: on the one hand, Fooñi, Kwatay, Bluf, Kaasa, Banjal, etc. are all varieties of Jola; on the other hand, Wolof, Jola, Mandinka, Mankanya, etc. each claim their linguistic and cultural space. Note that only some (codified) languages are recognised as national languages by the Senegalese Constitution. This form of territorialisation of the languages in Casamance (Cobbinah et al., 2016) has an impact on the characteristics of the language and linguistic repertoires which are present at school, and the school space can therefore be thought of as a micro-space resulting from the merging of two macro-spaces: the town and the village. This phenomenon, in which several languages from the same territory vie for the top position, makes choosing a single language of instruction in formal instruction problematic, as it implies the exclusion of all the other languages from the school territory.

On the basis of the observations carried out in this study of the building of plurilingual repertoires in Casamance, there is a need to develop approaches and tools which can contribute to the development of the plurilingual and intercultural dimensions of education (Coste, 2013).

In this chapter, I focus on the process of moving towards an inclusive approach that would make this question of choice easier in the classroom and the school space. To this end, I set out three 'tools' for an inclusive language education policy which would be suitable for educating citizens who will be capable of keeping pace with the times. Starting with new data collected *in situ* at a bilingual school in Casamance, and following the interactional dynamics inside and outside the classroom, I refer to work done in Casamance in relation to the linguistic imagination of children at school there (Moreau, 1990), the need for a paradigm shift (Cobbinah et al., 2016) and the process of building plurilingual repertoires (Dreyfus & Juillard, 2001; Sow, 2016) to argue that the question of language use at school is not so much didactic or linguistic as sociolinguistic.

**Table 1:** Example utterance in Wolof: 'GC yow, nguir yalla, abal ma sa bic'

GC	yow	nguir	yalla	abal	ma	sa	bic
GC (a diminutive form of the pupil's name was used)	you	for	God	Imperative + second-person singular + <i>lend</i>	me	your	pen
'You, GC, for the love of God lend me your pen!'							

5. Quotes from qualitative surveys conducted in the playground at 11 a.m. on Thursday 9 March 2017 in school.

## Approach and methodology

The data presented here was collected during the 2016–17 academic year (January to May 2017) in a primary school in Casamance, in addition to the data obtained in the 2016 study in the same institution.

I selected this school because it moved from having one to two bilingual (Jola–French) classes under the bilingual ELAN-Afrique programme, thus presenting a pretext for comparing certain attitudes among pupils from two different classes: Grade 1 and Grade 3. In addition, it would be possible to observe whether the teacher's own trajectory has an impact on teaching.

I conducted a peripheral observation of 11 of the 16 classes in the school. After these classroom observations, I selected four classes for the survey sample, two of which were bilingual (French–Jola) classes. Classes were chosen according to the social network of one pupil, Pupil A, who was my main research subject.

My survey sample was made up of 181 pupils (40 in Grade 1 bilingual class, 42 in Grade 3 bilingual class, 47 in Grade 3 monolingual class and 52 in Grade 5 monolingual class<sup>6</sup>), 11 classroom teachers trained in French, two teachers trained in Arabic, two trainee teachers, one school inspector, and the school's head teacher (a bilingual Grade 3 teacher who became head teacher several months after the survey).

My investigation encompassed observation, description and analysis. The study and final data collection were carried out in several steps following the ethnographic approach of Agnès Van Zanten's model (2010).

- An extended stay in the community being studied (five successive months during the 2016–17 school year) allowed data collection through both participant observation (in the school playground with the pupils at breaktime) and peripheral observation (in the classroom when teachers were teaching).
- A focus on daily activities (in particular those of the main subject, Pupil A, and his immediate social network, who were all monitored in various socialising contexts outside school: the family home, sports grounds, outside church, their next-door neighbour's home, etc.).
- A focus on what meaning pupils and teachers attributed to their actions.
- Accounts of instances which revealed the contextualisation and internal coherence of certain significant phenomena observed, for example when Pupil A, in the playground, revealed his perfect command of Wolof, even though, in the interviews, he had declared that he was only able to understand the language to a limited extent. On this point, it must be noted that the pupils, in their statements, did not make much distinction between speaking, understanding and using a language.

- A gradual building of the interpretative framework of the meaning of the data: although a set of hypotheses had been defined in advance, this school presented certain specificities. For example, one of my hypotheses was to consider that, in monolingual classes, if pupils speak a language other than French they risk being punished by the teacher and/or school administrators. However, at this school, it was common to see monolingual class teachers speaking to their pupils in the local language inside the classroom. In other words, what is considered a gap elsewhere could in this case be integrated as a factor facilitating inclusive teaching and learning situations.
- My methods of presenting my interpretations intentionally combine narration, descriptions and theoretical conceptualisation.

## Results and discussion: Three tools promoting inclusive education

### Tool 1: Formalising the informal – not one but several languages of instruction

By formalising the informal, I mean internalising and taking into account the plurilingualism that exists *de facto* in the school environment (in and out of the classroom) in the formal education system.

As school monolingualism exists only in name, a mental transformation towards a consideration of pupils' and teachers' trajectories and their linguistic/language behaviour at school is essential.

### The observed plurilingualism is not necessarily stated by the speakers

I collected data on the stated and observed repertoires of pupils at the school: data on the stated repertoire was obtained in semi-structured interviews, and data on the observed repertoire stems from my observations in class. Using these two data collection tools simultaneously showed the difference between the stated and the observed reality.

I focus here on the data collected and observed on Pupil A, a pupil in the monolingual Grade 5 class, and his four friends (Table 2). From this social network, I was able to reconstruct the relationship between the content of the pupils' linguistic repertoire and their use of language inside the school. These same behaviours were generally observed across the groups of pupils surveyed (a total sample of 181 pupils), but since my approach was intended to be qualitative, I deliberately abstained from a quantitative approach in order to emphasise the elements explaining the speakers' language behaviours and linguistic attitudes.

6. In the Senegalese school system, these grades are called: CI (*Cours d'initiation* [Initiation class]) for Grade 1, CE1 (*Cours élémentaire 1ère année* [Elementary class year 1]) for Grade 3, and CM1 (*Cours moyen 1ère année* [Middle class year 1]) for Grade 5.

**Table 2:** Summary of the plurilingual repertoire of five pupils: stated vs observed frequency of language use across six languages

Language													
	Jola		Mandinka		Mankanya		Manjak		Wolof		French		
	Stated repertoire	Observed repertoire											
<b>Pupil A</b>	0	0	4	5	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	
<b>Pupil B</b>	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	5	4	
<b>Pupil C</b>	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	5	5	
<b>Pupil D</b>	2	2	0	0	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>Pupil E</b>	0	0	5	5	2	4	1	4	2	5	5	3	

Pupil A = main subject; Pupils B, C, D and E = Pupil A's friends. The frequency of use of each language is represented on a scale of 0 to 5 according to the stated and the observed reality (0 indicates that the language was not used at all and 5 indicates a very frequent use of the language).

Taking the specific example of Wolof, Table 2 shows that all of Pupil A's friends had it in their repertoire. However, Pupil D (of the Mankanya ethnic group, born in Dakar and who only moved to Ziguinchor at the age of nine) was the only one who said he could speak this language. In other words, many of the children in school (in the semi-structured interviews) failed to say that they were proficient in Wolof. However, our observations showed that Wolof was an integral part of children's repertoires and that it had even become a lingua franca in Ziguinchor, as Dreyfus and Juillard observed in 2001. What we see here is the manifestation of representations of the Wolof language which have generated a relatively negative attitude towards it.

### The school space is a reflection of other social spaces

A school, as a micro-society, is a particular socialising context which reveals the linguistic attitudes and behaviours perceptible on a daily basis in families, neighbourhoods, towns and villages, etc. Therefore, its relationships to the other spaces where its stakeholders are living (teachers and pupils) must be seen as an epistemological continuum rather than a dichotomous one. In other words, the dividing line between the family dynamic, in terms of the policy in families with regard to language, and the school space, in terms of the language and linguistic uses it conveys, is not watertight.

By setting French as the official language, the law has turned it explicitly into the language of work and the language of school. It also implicitly makes it the language of social advancement and a guaranteed better social status because, until recently, the French school was not perceived as a place of acquisition or transmission of knowledge, but rather as a means of becoming more astute in life, a means of acquiring 'the art of winning without being right'.<sup>7</sup> Treiber (2013) describes this as the single most important mechanism of cultural colonialism.

This situation, a lasting fallout from colonisation, consequently generated certain linguistic attitudes towards the languages present at school. The issue of the use of languages in the school space is therefore more sociolinguistic than didactic and linguistic. Thus, recognising and accepting that the local languages are just as present as French at school marks the beginning of a real reflection on the choice of the medium of instruction.

Speaking about the value of the ELAN-Afrique programme for the development of sustainable education, Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of La Francophonie, stated in 2016 that 'in the French-speaking world, improving the quality of education in multilingual contexts must take into account the child's mother tongue' (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016). Local linguistic specificities require a careful reflection on the choice of medium of instruction for education, especially if the education in question is intended to be a vector of national unity and openness towards globalisation.

7. Words of the Grande Royale in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* (1961).

Yet there is currently a linguistic conflict in the school environment because while French is the language of instruction in Senegal, other languages are used in school, too. At the same time, there is the problem of which national language to choose instead, which becomes a complex choice due to the fact that the pupils, just like the populations in general, demonstrate an internalisation of the supremacy of certain languages, already at their young age, irrespective of their use of these languages.

The gap between everyday language practices and the school norm (in terms of choice of medium of instruction) appears so great that it would seem appropriate to take the linguistic uses in the school environment into account to reach a better balance in the system.

Developing strategies that prioritise content, and not just the medium, would perhaps be a first way of implementing the formalisation of the informal. To that end, I recommend the adoption of a system which deploys several languages of instruction, not just one, and this can only be done by integrating all of the components of the learners' linguistic repertoires throughout the teaching/learning process.

## Tool 2: Bi- or plurilingualism – local languages and knowledge as both obstacles and resources

Bilingualism and plurilingualism constitute the reality experienced on a daily basis by pupils in Casamance. In the bilingual class at the school, the French–Jola alternation has shown that it is easier to teach skills when the rudiments have already been acquired in the first language.

Although they consider themselves poorly trained and equipped, teachers of bilingual classes think that, far from being a problem, plurilingualism among pupils is an asset that should be reinforced:

*The system does not support the use of languages other than French at primary school. But, since I started teaching Jola, I have noticed that I am saving a lot of time in my lessons in French. Sometimes we are asked to do a lesson in 30 minutes, but, if I happen to do the content in Jola, I save time and the children understand better and faster.*

**Mrs A, bilingual Grade 3 teacher in 2017–18 in the school being studied**

It thus appears that indifference to the socio-cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences is one way in which bi- or plurilingualism is effective in school: as soon as one ignores the differences, it goes without saying that emphasis is placed on what there is in common.

Note that even though there are many different languages in Casamance, cultural practices are identical, cultural habits similar and linguistic practices overlap depending on whether one belongs to one social category (young people, women, educated, urban, rural, etc.) or another.

In Casamance, French plays the role of unifying language, of a lingua franca or bridging language allowing speakers of different linguistic communities to communicate without much difficulty. Multilingualism was therefore initially a source of division in the sense that linguistic multicephalism led each community to consider its own language as the one which should occupy the first place on the school scene. Today, however, this multicephalism is more interlinguistic and cross-linguistic, and can therefore be a reinforcement to French and act as a scaffolding for the transmission and acquisition of local and 'universal' knowledge.

### The content taught must be in line with the social and linguistic environment of the learner

I choose the term 'local knowledge' in the design of curricula because blindly mapping out content from the source language to the target language can be problematic. For example, in our data, a difficulty observed in Mrs A getting her pupils to represent 'traffic lights' allows us to observe that the more the content taught is in line with the learner's direct social and linguistic environment, the easier the learning will be.

In Ziguinchor there are no traffic lights; it can therefore be assumed that pupils who have never left Casamance will find it difficult to imagine what they are like. The difficulty for the teacher was all the more obvious since she had to resort to codemixing to make herself vaguely understood: she used the expression '*e lampay sa baje si couleur sifeegi*' ('the three-coloured light').

Turning the double obstacle of cultural plurality and multilingualism into an asset when writing curricula essentially boils down to the design of the content being taught: I suggest starting from the known to teach skills in the unknown.

While it is obvious that language conveys culture, it is just as obvious that a change in mindset is needed today so that the attitudes to and representations of different languages are reviewed: speaking a local language at school is no longer a symptom of academic failure, and speaking French well is not a sure-fire guarantee of meteoric social advancement.

Multilingualism is more a resource than an obstacle in the education system in Senegal. If learners come with their languages, they also come with their cultures, which facilitates a diversified and mutually enriching inclusive education for learners and teachers.

### Tool 3: Evolutionary/revolutionary change: towards an inclusive standard

By evolutionary/revolutionary change, I mean transitioning from an exclusive to an inclusive standard (Thiam, 2016).

This change can already be observed in language practices (Dreyfus & Juillard, 2001) to the extent that the relationship between language and identity in school usage is a process rather than a fact (Juillard, 2007). The same is true with the observation of language permeability in Ziguinchor (Nicolaï, 2007), and the absence of any linguistic boundaries in interactions (Cobbinah et al., 2016).

Knowing that the quality of education is closely linked to the choice of the medium of instruction, considering an inclusive standard at school, and not an exclusive norm, could improve the quality of education in Senegal (Sow, 2016).

The prescriptive approach to traditional grammar is not necessarily transferable to all linguistic systems, especially in Africa. However, if we are ready to admit that societies are dynamic and so are their languages, we must also admit that the dynamics resulting from mobility have an effect on language and linguistic uses which is very efficient. Consequently, the situation of variability in which learners and their teachers find themselves demonstrates some kind of language revolution – unorganised, of course – but which suggests the possibility of a new norm.

#### The principle of territoriality requires bi- or plurilingualism

A language needs a territory in which to flourish, hence the importance of the principle of territoriality (Cardinal, 2008). Likewise, an educational system, if it is to remain stable, needs to consider this factor and its implications for language policy choices. Consequently, all the factors influencing language use would benefit from being taken into account.

This perspective thus becomes revolutionary because it requires a paradigm shift: language education policy must move from monolingualism to bi- or plurilingualism at school, and in a variable manner.

This evolutionary/revolutionary change constitutes a break with tradition and with the rigidity of the education system in that it is shaped by a dynamic process that adjusts itself to and integrates harmoniously with a changing society. It is innovative in that it corrects a *de facto* situation, in contrast to current language policy which perpetuates it, and is rooted in a process of ‘formalising the informal’ which, ultimately, will demonstrate the advantages of bi- or plurilingualism and of formal education itself.

This revolutionary change – a radical transformation of language education policy – could be achieved by seeking to take into account all the social and cultural changes which impact the education process, including content development, choice of medium of instruction, etc.

An evolutionary change in the education system today is imperative given the emergence of new determinant factors (urbanisation, mobility, globalisation and the development of ICT). Thus, the generalisation of bi- or multilingual education, advocated by ELAN-Afrique, is essential.

### Conclusion

This chapter can be seen as a contribution to the debate on the implementation of a language policy which supports bi- or plurilingualism at school.

The methodological approach of this research, consisting of ethnographic observations, allows me to suggest that linguistic partnership in the Senegalese education system could result in a decrease in the school dropout rate and a better involvement of the different linguistic communities of Senegal. This was in fact identified in the final report of OIF’s LASCOLAF project in 2008, the findings of which were implemented through ELAN-Afrique:<sup>8</sup>

*Despite various reforms, the Senegalese education system, entirely built on French as the only language of instruction, is faced with difficulties which result in school failure on a massive scale, a high dropout rate, and chronically poor skills in French and, by extension, in other subjects. Actually drawing on the resources inherent in multilingual contexts, and in particular introducing national languages to the educational tools in basic education, alongside French, could help to overcome these difficulties.*

#### Ndiaye & Diakité (2008: p. 576)

It is notable that the pupils in bilingual Jola–French classes in Ziguinchor, who are particularly imbued with local Senegalese multilingualisms, develop better learning skills than the pupils in the equivalent monolingual class in the same grade.

Mastering the language of instruction appears to be fundamentally linked to mastering content among the young learners of Ziguinchor, Senegal.

*Translated from the French original by the British Senegalese Institute Translation Unit, Dakar, Senegal, and Philip Harding-Esch.*

8. LASCOLAF (Langues de Scolarisation dans l’Enseignement Fondamental en Afrique Subsaharienne Francophone, or Languages of Instruction in Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa). This project was a collaboration between the Globalisation, Development and Partnerships directorate of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the AFD (Agence Française de Développement, or French Development Agency), the OIF and the AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, or University Agency of la Francophonie).

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# 10. Introducing Wolof in Senegalese schools: A case study

Augustin Ndione

## Abstract

This chapter is an account of a pilot education project lasting four years, during which a Senegalese national language (Wolof) was introduced into a primary school in a village in Senegal. The study's primary aim was to analyse how the villager farmers, who mostly speak Saafi-Saafi, view the use of Wolof as the medium of instruction. Another goal was to find out how teachers perceived this new way of teaching.

This chapter gives a double analysis of the pilot, showing that language diversity may, at the same time, be a key to success for the introduction of national languages into school but also act as a brake on that success due to the lack of inclusion of certain languages, which raises the issue of otherness, i.e. taking into account the other languages present in a given geographical area.

## Introduction

In the educational landscape of developing countries like Senegal, it has become common to choose to include the so-called 'national' languages<sup>1</sup> in the education system. This then raises the question: what might the consequences be of introducing them?

The 12th Language and Development Conference held in Dakar in November 2017 emphasised the importance of these languages, notably as levers in the development process, including many initiatives aiming to introduce national languages into primary schools gradually, as is the case with the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)'s ELAN-Afrique programme (Ecole et langues nationales en Afrique, or School and national languages in Africa) (IFEF, 2017).

Since its independence, the language of instruction in Senegal has been French. However, Sustainable Development Goal 4 ('Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all') advocates implementing primary school education in the mother tongue<sup>2</sup> – a position which has long been adopted by UNESCO.

It is within this context that the ELAN-Afrique programme was launched by IFEF (Institut de la Francophonie pour l'éducation et la formation, or Francophonie Institute for Education and Training), a subsidiary body of the OIF. This initiative implements bilingual education (in French and a national language) in primary schools in several countries in francophone Africa, including Senegal. In Senegal, ELAN-Afrique concerns the first six languages that were recognised as national languages in 2001 (i.e. codified as set out in the Senegalese Constitution): Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke and Wolof.

An important clarification must be kept in mind: the national language chosen in an ELAN-Afrique school will not necessarily be the mother tongue of the pupils. In fact, IFEF specifies that the ELAN-Afrique approach is based upon 'numerous studies' claiming that education is more efficient 'in a common language which is mastered in the family and the community' (IFEF, 2018: p. 35) – a larger definition.

Official reports testify to the 'effectiveness' of the ELAN-Afrique programme. In this research project, we were interested in finding out whether, if French was coupled with a 'national' language which may just as well be a 'foreign' language to some pupils, and is therefore not the mother tongue of those pupils, this experience would be well received by the pupils, their families and their teachers. Could it, over time, prove to be detrimental to the effectiveness which is being sought in the teaching?

We conducted this case study in the primary school of a village where the majority of the inhabitants belong to the Seereer-Saafi ethnic group, whose language, Saafi-Saafi, is not one of the six national languages deployed by ELAN-Afrique. Here, the ELAN-Afrique programme introduced Wolof.

In this chapter, I start with a review of language policy, in terms of language of instruction in Senegal since independence, in order to review issues that consequently arise for programmes such as ELAN-Afrique. I then present our case study and the issues we investigated, our interviews and the results that followed.

1. According to Article 1 (Paragraph 2) of the Senegalese Constitution dated 7 January 2001: 'The official language of the Republic of Senegal is French. The national languages are: Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke, Wolof and any other language that will be codified.'

2. Sub-indicator 4.5.2: 'Percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction.'

Next, I propose some points for discussion, including questions on the safeguarding of minority languages and the transfer of knowledge between languages, as well as the importance of linguistic representations specific to the culture of the community. Finally, I explore certain avenues for strategic choices within those frameworks, and above all when the mother tongue is not chosen as the second language in a bilingual education project.

## National languages at school in Senegal

At the beginning of the 1960s, the wind of independence blew in Africa. As it departed from its former colonies, the colonial power left its language as a form of legacy to the newly independent countries. From then on, Senegal, like several other African countries formerly colonised by France, has faced a linguistic destiny which integrates the French language.

A solution to the management of multilingualism in Senegal was set up by the young independent nation. A language policy and language planning took shape, stressing the different statuses of the languages present in Senegal.

This was an ambiguous, indeed a contradictory, policy regarding the facts: an assimilationist language policy which asserted that 'replacing French as the official language and language of instruction is neither desirable nor possible', as pronounced by the President of Senegal, Leopold Sédar Senghor, in his decree of May 1971. Dumont and Maurer (1995) go as far as to qualify the linguistic policy of Senegal under Senghor as 'linguistic balkanisation', because it ended up only promoting the French language. Their argument lists several criticisms, notably the point of view that this design for the use of French in the Senegalese context was elitist and based upon a culture defended by Senghor; furthermore, in this policy, they detect a form of devaluation of the local and national languages and cultures, as those languages did not seem able, at least as they were being used and presented, to convey the new concepts of modernity and scientific progress.

Indeed, in that period, African or 'national' languages were totally missing in Senegal's educational agenda and there was no political will in the language planning to include them. Only French and the other (European) foreign languages were taught. Alliances Françaises (centres for the teaching of the French language) spread over the whole country as incubators for the popularisation of the French language.

French was thus considered as the language of the intellectual elite of the newly independent African states, and governments, including the Senegalese government, wanted to keep it that way. The *Méthode pour parler français* (PPF)<sup>3</sup> teaching method was created to promote the learning of the French language and considered French as a special instrument for development and modernisation. The PPF gave the priority and the primacy to spoken French by attempting to establish language habits based on memorisation and significant structures of the French language.

## The ELAN-Afrique project

Launched in 2011, the goal of ELAN-Afrique is to promote the joint use of African languages and French in primary schools in francophone Africa: 'reading, writing and arithmetic through pupils' better command of French, starting by teaching them in their mother tongue' (IEFF, 2018: p. 35). ELAN-Afrique is a partnership between the OIF and the Ministries of Basic Education, or their representatives, across 12 African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, DR Congo, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Madagascar and Togo). In 2017 ELAN-Afrique counted 2,500 schools and more than 225,000 pupils all learning in bilingual classes: 35 national languages of instruction, in addition to French (IEFF, 2017).

The ELAN-Afrique project was born from the acknowledgement of the importance of the mother tongue as the language of instruction. Several core elements of the conception of the ELAN-Afrique approach can be identified in UNESCO's World Declaration on Education for All (1990), for example:

*Primary education must be universal, ensure that the basic learning needs of all children are satisfied, and take into account the culture, needs, and opportunities of the community. [...] Literacy programmes are indispensable because literacy is a necessary skill in itself and the foundation of other life skills. Literacy in the mother tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage.*

**UNESCO (1990: p. 6)**

3. *La méthode Pour Parler Français* (method for speaking French) was developed by the Centre of Applied Linguistics of Dakar (Centre de linguistique appliquée de Dakar, or CLAD) and implemented in all state schools in Senegal from 1965 to 1980. The method 'consisted of attempting to adjust education to sociocultural realities' and to the linguistic context of the pupils (Diop, 2017: p. 65). The PPF was badly received due to the 'predominance of spoken French' and was discontinued in 1981 (Daff, 2017).

The General Secretary of the OIF, Michaëlle Jean, described the project in these terms:

*Within the francophone space, the improvement of the quality of education in a multilingual context must take into account the mother tongue of the child, while at the same time opening them up to the world with French. I consider ELAN-Afrique to be an educational choice which I believe is key for the future.*

**French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (2016: p. 3)**

Also, on the IFEF website:

*Numerous studies have shown it: during the first years of education, teaching in a common language which is mastered in the family and the community predisposes the child to the learning of a second language, in this case French, and creates conditions for better school results.*

**IFEF (2017)**

These statements present the ELAN-Afrique programme both as a lever and as a means to help certain populations access an education and a form of learning that should be more efficient than one that is carried out solely in a foreign language; indeed, French is little or not at all understood by pupils when they start their first year at school.

## Our research site

The research site village is in the Thiès region of Senegal, where there are several schools involved in the ELAN-Afrique programme. The village has a rural population of about 400 inhabitants. There are at least three national languages in contact with each other: Wolof, Saafi-Saafi and Pulaar. The most widespread mother tongue – Saafi-Saafi – is a Cangin<sup>4</sup> language. Saafi-Saafi and Wolof both function as lingua francas in the village's society: children from other ethnic groups manage to speak these two languages while speaking their own as well – this includes Pulaar, among others.

Since the start of the 2013 academic year, under the ELAN-Afrique method, Wolof has been introduced as the language of instruction at the research site village school, its use evolving year by year to act as a support to the learning of French (support language).

## Issues

First, we wanted to see how the programme worked in the village, but as time passed, we shifted our interest to focus on the choice of the support language, which is supposed to be the mother tongue, because if we refer to Dubois et al. (2002: p. 312) we notice a difference between what we found in the programme's stated aims and the choice of Wolof in this particular case: 'We call mother tongue the first language learnt by the speaker (the one of which he is a native speaker) from his immediate family environment.' In actual fact, the ELAN-Afrique programme offers a less precise definition: 'A common language, mastered in the family and the community' (IFEF, 2018: p. 35) and in the context of this school, ELAN-Afrique refers to Wolof as 'L1' and French as 'L2', although 'L1' is a term normally used for the identification of the mother tongue. Although language diversity can appear as an asset for the success of initiatives introducing national languages into school, this diversity can also act as a brake because it raises the issue of otherness, i.e. the taking into account of the other languages present in a given geographical area.

The underlying research question of this research can therefore be formulated as follows: would the fact of replacing French by a 'national' language which can be just as much a 'foreign' language to certain pupils, and is therefore not the mother tongue of those pupils, be detrimental to the effectiveness which is being sought in the teaching?

We wanted also to determine the extent to which this issue can have an effect on the transfer of knowledge between languages and, ultimately, on the diversity of linguistic representations. In its 1990 declaration, UNESCO took into account not only the importance of education in the mother tongue, but also the importance of the vitality of the system of representation specific to every language by distinguishing 'cultural identity and heritage' (UNESCO, 1990: p. 6). By representation, we must understand non-linguistic (Laurendeau, 1998) cognitive phenomena which intervene in the framework of the building of linguistic structures. There are thus cognitive representations and linguistic representations. Cognitive representations are conditioned by cultural and physical experiences. Thus, according to Culoli:

*To say that we are dealing with representations of representations is a play on the word 'representation', just as when we say that this word 'represents' something – like a 'representative' of the people – meaning 'it stands for' something. It is not a term-for-term substitution but it is, nevertheless, a representation relationship. It is not a term-for-term relationship in which an operation of determination might produce a unique, unequivocal representative.*

**Culoli (1985: p. 6)**

4. See Ethnologue: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/sav>

What we learn from Culoli's words is that there is a link between cognitive representations specific to every community and linguistic representations specific to every language.

The language of instruction therefore becomes the keystone of pluri- or multilingual education, which will not develop in education systems until it benefits from a language of instruction which is fit for purpose. Taking the words of Cummins (2001), we see the importance of the mother tongue in the education system:

*When parents and other caregivers (e.g. grandparents) are able to spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well-prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally. Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue they have learned in the home to the school language. From the point of view of children's development of concepts and thinking skills, the two languages are interdependent. Transfer across languages can be two-way: when the mother tongue is promoted in school (e.g. in a bilingual education programme), the concepts, language, and literacy skills that children are learning in the majority language can transfer to the home language. In short, both languages nurture each other when the educational environment permits children access to both languages.*

#### **Cummins (2001: pp. 17–18)**

Furthermore, according to Kâ (2002), the Senegalese National Commission for the Reform of Education and Training (Commission Nationale de Réforme de l'Éducation et de la Formation, or CNREF)<sup>5</sup> underlined in 1981 that:

*National languages are a fact of our culture; they certainly constitute our special and irreplaceable instrument of communication. They are the only tools that can really promote the creative essence of our people as well as their character, and only they can foster our people's economic, social and cultural development within a framework of endogenous development (Annex IIE, p. 37).*

#### **Kâ (2002)**

5. According to Sylla (1992: p. 6), the CNREF was given the task of 'drawing from the conclusions, propositions and recommendations of the Estates-General of Education approved by the Government, for the purpose of their concrete deployment'. The Commission technique n° 2 (Technical Commission n° 2) of the CNREF was given the task of analysing general education policy.

## **Methodology**

The fieldwork followed a methodology which was quantitative but also qualitative.

We conducted interviews with stakeholders at the village school (pupils, teachers and the pupils' parents) not only to gather feedback on the implementation of the ELAN-Afrique programme here, but also to understand stakeholders' opinions on the choice of the supporting national language – Wolof in this case.

First, we used a simple interview guide with closed questions which our interviewees answered. We interviewed 37 pupils and 40 adults. Due to the period during which we visited the research site, it was difficult to gather the children. We did not find it necessary to record their sex or age.

The answers we received from the closed questions were then studied statistically.

For the qualitative approach, we conducted interviews with open questions, giving more latitude to the interviewees.

The questions which guided our thinking were the following:

- Why have national languages at school, and how?
- Why Wolof?
- How do the people concerned see that choice?
- Does having a dominant language threaten so-called 'minority languages'?
- How can linguistic theory and, for example, certain tools facilitate the passage from a language A to a language B?

## Case study of the ELAN-Afrique project: Results

### Implementation of the programme: From Wolof to French

The organisation of the programme at the research site school was described as follows by the interviewees (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Implementation of the ELAN-Afrique programme in the research site school

Grade	Percentage of education in the medium of Wolof	Percentage of education in the medium of French	Comment
Grade 1 ( <i>Cours d'Initiation</i> )	100%	French is introduced, spoken only	
Grade 2 ( <i>Cours Préparatoire</i> )	75%	25% (spoken and written)	The notion of transfer begins at this level.
Grade 3 ( <i>Cours Élémentaire Première Année</i> )	50%	50%	The transfer from the source language (L1) to the target language (L2) becomes effective.
Grade 4 ( <i>Cours Élémentaire Deuxième Année</i> )	0%	100%	

After these interviews, we gave the teachers the opportunity to make observations on the programme in semi-directive interviews.

One teacher found that the programme was a positive approach which helped learners acquire certain skills better: 'With this method, we see progress in learning, and the gradual change from L1 to L2 is something that facilitates the learning'<sup>6</sup> (interview held on 16 June 2017).

For the school's teaching staff, the main weakness of the programme remained the training of teachers. It was necessary, according to them, to prioritise adequate training in the language and grammar of the national languages, because 'knowledge of the language is an essential part of teaching oral and written communication'<sup>7</sup> (interview held on 16 June 2017).

In addition, teachers listed certain issues and areas that needed to be improved for the introduction of Wolof at this school to be truly successful:

- lack of recognition of the ability to teach a national language
- monitoring and stability of trained teachers
- existence of a relevant syllabary for Grades 1 and 2
- reading and writing textbooks being rare for Grades 3 and 4, some form of upskilling of the teachers is necessary to continue teaching in a national language.

We observe that the implementation of the ELAN-Afrique programme in this school and the development of the pilot phase were being carried out, to a large extent, in a similar fashion to those discussed by Darby & Dijkstra (2021), Juillard (2021), Ly et al. (2021) and Sow (2021). This indicates that there is a certain structural coherence to the programme.

After having collected the elements on the implementation of the ELAN-Afrique programme, we turned our focus to language issues in the village.

6. Original quotation: 'Avec cette méthode, nous voyons des progrès au niveau de l'apprentissage, l'évolution de la L1 à L2 de manière progressive est une chose qui facilite l'apprentissage.'

7. Original quotation: 'La connaissance de la langue est un élément primordial dans les enseignements de l'expression orale et de l'expression écrite.'

## Languages spoken in the home: The dominance of Wolof

In this part of our research, we were interested in the languages which were commonly spoken at home but not at school, to better draw the line between lingua francas, mother tongues and vernacular languages. Our observations indicated that Wolof was the language pupils used to speak among themselves at school.

Thus, as Wolof was the national language taught at school in the village, we wanted to discover which of the languages had the status of vernacular language for most of the children, bearing in mind the importance of what we call mother tongue within the ELAN-Afrique context.

The answers are recorded in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Languages spoken at home by the pupils

Language	Number	Percentage
Wolof	19	51.35%
Saafi-Saafi	16	43.25%
Pulaar	2	5.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sample: 37 pupils of the research site school. The question asked was: 'What is the language you use in your interactions at home?' (One of the following reformulations may have been used to clarify further: 'What is your mother tongue?' or 'What is the language that is spontaneously used at home in your exchanges with your parents, brothers or sisters?').

Although 95 per cent of the pupils we interviewed (35 out of 37) said they belonged to the Seereer-Saafi ethnic group, we noted that only a minority spoke their ethnic language, Saafi-Saafi, at home. Even if the use of Wolof did not result in a total absence of the use of their mother tongue, we noted that Wolof kept (as in the country as a whole) a leading role, with over 51 per cent of the interviewees speaking Wolof at home.

### Pupils are bi- or trilingual, but teachers do not share their languages

We wanted also to examine the bi- or trilingualism of learners. We asked the children how many languages they spoke (Table 3).

All pupils were Wolof speakers, even if only slightly. Note the absence of French, which cannot be considered to be spoken much by pupils outside of school.

**Table 3:** Number of languages spoken by the pupils

Number of languages	Pupils	Percentage
3: Pulaar, Saafi-Saafi, Wolof	2	5.4%
2: Saafi-Saafi, Wolof	35	94.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sample: 37 pupils of the research site school. The question asked was: 'What are the national languages that you speak?' or, to clarify further: 'How many languages do you speak? Which ones?'

The answers indicated that this village was very similar to other villages in Senegal which are in a situation of contact with other communities and other languages. The mother tongue of the villagers was Saafi-Saafi, but the villagers spoke Wolof, too. Some pupils coming from neighbouring villages spoke Pulaar.

However, we noticed that no teacher spoke either Saafi-Saafi or Pulaar. In fact, for teachers, it would seem impossible to introduce any language other than Wolof, given the fact that all teachers spoke Wolof and none of them were trained to teach a national language.

Consequently, Wolof appeared to be the choice by default: the simplest solution for the introduction of a national language understood by the teaching staff and the local population.

### Is Wolof the obvious choice of national language to introduce at school?

We wished to know whether the local population agreed with the general principle of introducing a national language at school.

After our interviews with the adults of the village, we conducted a qualitative analysis.

For the majority of the interviewees, Wolof seemed to be an excellent choice for the school system in general, because that language is a language of socialisation in the sense that it is the lingua franca of Senegal. All the people we met made a positive association on this point, recognising a quicker way into certain areas of knowledge. In addition, they often made a connection between the pupils and women's groups who had followed literacy programmes. For them, this proved the usefulness of introducing local languages to the education system and the knowledge and skills this can bring.

Beyond this apparently obvious choice, we asked the villagers (not the pupils) about choosing Wolof specifically as the national language to be introduced at the village school. We wanted to know if they would have chosen Wolof themselves, or another national language, notably their mother tongue.

**Table 4:** Do you agree with the choice of Wolof at school?

Wolof or not	Number	Percentage
Yes: Wolof	21	52.5%
No: Prefer Saafi-Saafi	17	42.5%
No: Prefer Pulaar	2	5%
Total	40	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sample: 40 adults from the research site village.

Of the adults, 52.5 per cent agreed with the choice of Wolof as a support language at the village school.<sup>8</sup>

- ‘Using Wolof as a support language is a means to include our children in a national education framework because Wolof is a language shared by most Senegalese.’
- ‘Teachers can teach our children more easily.’
- ‘Access to reading and writing in Wolof could allow children to help their parents with certain activities, particularly commerce.’

We also observed another attitude among interviewees: wanting to choose their own mother tongue as the language of instruction. Some 42.5 per cent would have preferred to choose Saafi-Saafi, and five per cent would have chosen Pulaar. We noted that their motivations were diverse.<sup>9</sup>

- ‘If we had Saafi-Saafi, this would allow the children to know their language and master it and so they would better understand our traditions, etc.’
- ‘Saafi-Saafi is our language, why should we use Wolof and not our language?’
- ‘If I had to choose the language of instruction, I do not see why my children could not learn to read and write in their own language, in our case Pulaar.’

Note that the language of instruction appears to hold a significant identity value, as indicated by the remarkable similarity of the percentages in Table 2 (languages spoken at home) and Table 4 (desired choice of the language of instruction).

Finally, the five per cent of interviewees (two individuals) who chose Pulaar ended up saying that choosing Wolof for all would be the best solution, because that way, no

one would be able to choose to have their own language taught to their children; although they also indicated that if they were in an area where the majority of people were Pulaar speakers, it would then be normal to choose Pulaar as the language of the majority. Note that in certain schools of Senegal, the ELAN-Afrique project selects Pulaar as the language of instruction, as one of the first six national languages named in the constitution.

## Comments

In summary, we learned two lessons from our study on the introduction of Wolof in the research site village.

- Firstly, the people we met unanimously agreed with the introduction of a national language as a learning support – both teaching staff and parents. Indeed, from an external point of view, according to the feedback we received, these types of programme seemed to be universally popular.
- Secondly, what people did not all agree on, at least in this village, was the question of which support language to choose specifically. In fact, opinions on this were sharply divided. The percentage of adults expressing their preference for each language (Table 4) matched the percentage of pupils speaking that language at home (Table 2). These results seem to indicate the attachment of parents to the transmission of their own language and culture (and, by extension, of their systems of representation) to their children.

The question is therefore whether the ELAN-Afrique project is successful in integrating national languages and turning them into real levers for a more direct route to knowledge and more efficient learning.

Teachers, pupils and pupils’ parents in the village were unanimously agreed on this point. They viewed this programme as highly useful for pupils to access quality education. They clearly expressed a view that choosing a national language as a support or foundation to access French later was very positive, for them.

Let us recall that the purpose of the ELAN-Afrique programme was to facilitate the acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills, starting always from a first language (mother tongue) and moving on to a second language (French). It therefore involves reconciling two systems of extralinguistic representation, i.e. two ways of seeing the world through the two languages. In the case of the school in this village, the aim was to achieve a form of Wolof–French bilingualism.

8. Original: ‘Utiliser le wolof comme langue support est un moyen d’insérer nos enfants dans une logique d’enseignement nationale car le wolof est la langue partagée par le plus grand nombre des Sénégalaïs’; ‘Les enseignants peuvent plus facilement enseigner à nos enfants’; ‘L’accès à la lecture et à l’écriture wolof peut permettre aux enfants d’aider leurs parents dans certaines activités, notamment avec le commerce’.

9. Original: ‘Si on prend le saafi-saafi, cela permet aux enfants de connaître leur langue et peuvent se l’approprier et du coup ils pourraient mieux comprendre ce que sont nos traditions, etc.’; ‘Le saafi-saafi est notre langue, pourquoi devrions nous passer par le wolof et non par cette langue?’; ‘Si on doit pouvoir choisir la langue pour l’enseignement, je ne vois pas pourquoi mes enfants ne pourraient pas apprendre à lire et à écrire dans leur propre langue, ici le pulaar.’

To what extent could choosing a majority language (not the mother tongue) be seen as a threat to language diversity? There is a whole policy domain regarding the preservation of languages and particularly so-called 'minority languages'. Thus, would not the fact that we favour in Senegal the six 'originally' national languages (as in this first phase of the ELAN-Afrique programme) constitute a threat to research on 'small languages' and their preservation?<sup>10</sup> Within ELAN-Afrique, it was impossible to choose Saafi-Saafi, since it was not recognised as a national language by the authorities in this context.

## Discussion

In this part, we will propose reflections that can be seen as recommendations for the implementation of this type of programme. This approach is inspired by the work of Audin (2006).

### Is a single national language at school a threat to minority languages?

From the point of view of language diversity, ELAN-Afrique's approach is to use the mother tongue to facilitate access to quality education. In certain situations the languages introduced may be the most widely spoken ones, but they could not be considered as mother tongues in the communities, as is the case in this village.

We therefore return to the question: does choosing Wolof as the medium of instruction in a multilingual area, or in an area where another language is most widely spoken, create a situation of bilingualism between Wolof and French to the detriment of national languages (Saafi-Saafi in this case), in the long or medium term?

This question relates to a more general and very topical issue of the preservation of languages. Today, the status of Wolof as a lingua franca in Senegal and its omnipresence in different spaces appears to be a threat for minority languages. This raises the question of whether it would be beneficial to deploy other national languages as the medium of instruction, to preserve them and raise their status.

### A threat to the diversity of systems of representation?

A language is a cultural trait specific to the people who speak it. Thus, could the fact of not offering speakers of Saafi-Saafi education in their mother tongue influence their system of representation in some way?

The diversity of languages is an asset which may be preserved by proposing a different method of teaching. This would take into account the fact that the way languages are organised, in terms of representation, means that the passage from one language to another would be easier if it were more widely understood that every language represents the world, and builds its own world, in a particular and unique way.

Robert (1999: pp. 22–23) shows that representations – that is, constructions whether of units (terms), concepts or related notions – are different from one language to the other:

*Different languages [...] construct different 'referential paths' to reach the same object [...] the diversity of referential paths accounts for both inter-linguistic variation and some differences between synonyms within a given language.*

Problems arising during translation are an illustration of this. 'The butterfly' is *cuuni enox* (the spirit of the cow) in Cangin languages such as Saafi-Saafi and *lëpp-a-lëpp* in Wolof (of unknown etymology; it may be an ideophone). Three terms, three different conceptual representations: the notion of the butterfly does not seem to cover the same range of physical and cultural properties from one language to another.

To shift from a language A to a language B efficiently while preserving the variety of representations of these languages, it may be advisable to give to the different stakeholders of programmes such as ELAN-Afrique conceptual, stable, explicit and usable points of reference in each language of instruction (e.g. Wolof, Pulaar, Seereer, etc. and, of course, French), as described in Audin's study (2006) advocating a similar approach in the teaching of a second language.

Finally, to study the way languages function, it may be useful to shed light on the relationship between language and reality, which is the foundation of the system of representation specific to every language. Perhaps the ability to navigate between the level of language (the markers) and the level of reality (the values associated to the markers) should be included in the skillset being taught at school. It is certain that these levels are not the same from a language A to a language B. We know that the relationship between language and extralinguistic reality is complex. Learners appear to have no problem navigating this complexity in the spoken language but may be confused when there is a switch to a foreign language or even from the spoken to the written language (Sakhno, 2010 and Audin, 2006).

10. We observe here a case of cultural imperialism which is 'the result of a balance of power which favours a dominant language which controls both the number of speakers and the economic power which generates cultural products. The cultural domination stretches from school to the products deployed by technological means such as cinema, radio, television and ICT. Minority groups which cannot even rely on school to promote their languages have practically no chance of [ensuring their languages'] survival' (Leclerc, 2018).

## Conclusion

To overcome difficulties in switching from a language A to a language B, we must turn to language activity and the complex relationships between the linguistic and extralinguistic worlds. This would highlight the links between languages. Thus, for example, if we use linguistics alongside didactics, we might identify interesting avenues for switching not only from one language to another but also from one system of representation to another.

In this context, language is apprehended through linguistic reality, i.e. through utterances and through written text. Utterances are a material and physical manifestation of the signifying mental activity of the enunciator who constructs the reality he wishes to share with his interlocutor. The latter also constructs his own reality from what he hears and the parameters of the situation of enunciation.

Indeed, successful communication depends on the gradual adjustment of each person's respective realities. Culioni (1985 and elsewhere) writes about 'regulation', i.e. that a speaker and an interlocutor need to reduce the differences between them as much as possible to reach an intercomprehension or a communication, in the sense of reaching what Cicourel (1973: pp. 34–35, 52–53) calls the 'reciprocity of perspectives'.

*Translated from the French original by the British Senegalese Institute Translation Unit, Dakar, Senegal, and Philip Harding-Esch.*

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# 11. The impact of Senegalese primary school teachers' trajectories and language profiles on bilingual education

Caroline Juillard

## Abstract

The training of primary school teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa has to include a careful appraisal of the diversity of their trajectories and language profiles as well as their linguistic practices and classroom teaching styles. Sociolinguistic studies carried out *in situ* in Senegal, both in Dakar and in rural and urban Casamance, have identified some of these differences and theorised about the impact of teachers teaching the way they themselves were taught, and other characteristics, on classroom practice. This chapter discusses the examples of two teachers from Dakar, each with very different training backgrounds, experiences and classroom practices, although working at the same school. It also considers the repeated use of ritualised interaction models, which are very probably inherited and reproduced in the classroom. Comparing French-medium classes and bilingual classes (using a national language and French as the mediums of instruction) shows that these models are engrained. Using the official language at school in this way restricts the range of communicative resources available and reinforces the use of spoken text.

## Introduction and context

Teacher training and teachers' characteristics were seldom raised at the 12th Language and Development Conference. UNESCO's BS Mendisu did, however, underline in his presentation 'the critical role of the teacher' and indicated that 'their capacity has to be built'.<sup>1</sup> I totally agree. It is necessary, when teaching a foreign language and teaching through the medium of that foreign language (in a multilingual context) and also in bilingual education (from L1<sup>2</sup> to the foreign language), to reconsider teacher training and to sensitise teachers to the importance of language contact at school, from the social and linguistic perspective as well as what it means in terms of learning.

## Context: Senegal and Sub-Saharan Africa

In Senegal, the development of formal education requires an improvement in the status and a stabilisation<sup>3</sup> of the teaching profession, neither of which can be achieved without improving teacher training and teachers' ability to change their practice and not just the content of education.

This is particularly true for so-called 'monolingual' (French-medium) education, but also for the experimental classes in so-called 'bilingual' education (in a national language<sup>4</sup> and French). Although modified content (staged curriculum) and switching, or 'transferring',<sup>5</sup> between languages (from L1 to L2, i.e. French) are deployed in class, if teachers are not supported well, and in a sustained manner, their impact is weak. The teaching workforce has evolved, and very little is known about current teachers' characteristics, their teaching styles or their linguistic interaction with their pupils. To improve professional skills, it is necessary to equip them with a reflective stance on their own practice and positioning with regard to their interactions with pupils.

Indeed, studies assessing the state of primary school education in Sub-Saharan Africa underline the importance of reviewing primary teachers' initial and in-service training (cf. PASEC, 2015). Various researchers also point out that there are few studies providing in-depth analysis of classroom interaction or classroom practice in Sub-Saharan African countries (Maurer & Puren, 2018).

To that end, it is necessary to better understand teachers' characteristics (training, linguistic profile, professional trajectory) as well as their teaching styles (the role of alternating languages, the format of their interactions with learners, the relationship between speaking and writing, etc.).

1. Binyam Sisay Mendisu, UNESCO: The critical contribution of teachers to the effectiveness of mother tongue-based multilingual education. Unpublished paper presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 29 November 2017.
2. In this chapter, the term 'L1' is used to refer to the national language chosen in bilingual classes alongside French and is therefore not always the mother tongue for every pupil. In this case, this language does happen to be claimed by one or both parents as their own, in multilingual Casamance.
3. At the 12th Language and Development Conference, UNESCO's Saip Sy asked: How can we keep hold of teachers seeking to leave the profession to work elsewhere? I believe a better understanding of their trajectories and profiles is a prerequisite to any action aiming to address this.
4. Bilingual education programmes in Senegal select one of the 'national languages', i.e. a Senegalese language that has been officially recognised as 'national' following its codification.
5. The word *transfert* (transfer) is used in bilingual education teacher training to describe the transition from the national language to French, in initiatives such as the Francophonie's ELAN programme.

## Two key points to underline

I would like to emphasise two key points.

- First, the poorly understood context of bilingual practice in the classroom is represented in primary teachers' trajectories and linguistic profiles, in all their great diversity. We must bring this context to light through sociolinguistic studies.
- Second, the social reproduction of the communication formats used as learning tools at school (whether in traditional ways of teaching or in more innovative ones) cannot be dissociated from the languages in contact which are conveying them. This reproduction must be taken for what it is, in the given environments, from a sociolinguistic perspective.

These two key points shape teacher–student interactions both in and outside the classroom.

## Remarks on the linguistic practices in Senegalese schools

Alternating languages is, as is widely known, a key characteristic of linguistic practice in the Senegalese context. The intrusion of the children's first language, or of another local lingua franca, into the classroom has for a long time been observed in both formal and informal education by sociolinguistic research.

When I was studying this issue in Dakar schools, at the turn of the millennium, I observed that a diversity of attitudes among teachers gave the impression of a certain fluidity in teacher practice from one school to another, and – within one same institution – from one classroom to another. Some still used the 'symbol'<sup>6</sup> punishment to establish the use of French in the classroom, while others might speak Wolof 80 per cent of the time; and still others practised a *de facto* bilingualism as needed, for their communication and pedagogy.

The reason for this diversity among teachers can be found in the differences in their training, motivation and trajectories, as shown by Dreyfus and Juillard in their works between 1999 and 2002 in the framework of the AUF (Agence universitaire de la Francophonie)'s planned action research on 'the sociolinguistic dynamics (academic and extracurricular) of the learning and the use of French in a bi- or multilingual framework' (Juillard et al., 2005).

We therefore considered that school and the classroom, as places of contact between people, languages and uses, should be thought of as sociolinguistic spaces in a close relation with their immediate environment, which in Dakar is notably characterised by the wide and variable oral use of a mixed Wolof–French code (as described by Thiam [1994], among others). In such contexts, pupils are in daily contact with mixed forms of French and other languages, and they develop and learn, outside school, through or in interactions which are characterised by this mixed nature.

This type of bilingualism is present in schools, more or less sporadically, because of the pupils but also because of the teachers, especially the younger and less qualified among them.

## Methodology

Dreyfus and I observed that teachers exhibit profiles, classroom practice and variable appraisals of that practice, all of which are under-researched. These teachers received different training, at different times, were or were not in contact with French trainers or trained in a French school, and have worked in a variety of environments, whether rural or urban.

Insofar as we considered teachers as disseminators of linguistic models and of judgements on both languages and different kinds of practice to their pupils, we felt it necessary to understand their differences by carrying out a survey using semi-structured interviews on their language repertoire, their academic and professional backgrounds, and their practice of bilingualism in the classroom.

We were therefore able to obtain dozens of statements and views from teachers on the subject of bilingualism, and to test this information against their classroom practice (cf. Dreyfus, 2006a, 2006b; Dreyfus & Juillard, 2004; Juillard et al., 2005; Morsly, 2004).

In this chapter, I illustrate these issues by presenting two teachers from the same school in Dakar but with strongly contrasting trajectories and classroom practice. I then go on to discuss certain aspects of teacher–student interaction which were identified, including those observed in a bilingual programme which is officially recognised and supported. And, finally, I make suggestions for future actions to take, in both research and teacher training.

6. The *symbole* (symbol) is a bone that is passed to any pupil caught speaking in a language other than French. This practice, implemented in colonial times in imitation of this practice in France, was officially discontinued in the early 1970s, but some teachers have brought it back, on account of the significant difficulties pupils face in speaking French and in separating languages in their discourse.

## Very different career paths, profiles and classroom practice: Two teachers' profiles

Teachers in Dakar generally report a decline in spoken French in Dakar, and an increase of the use of both Wolof and mixed varieties, including when they themselves speak to their peers. However, they do not all practise language alternation in the same way:

*The older among them rather practise a 'marked' alternation of codes, clearly separating the linguistic systems that are present; whereas the younger ones use a mixture of varieties, close to those currently used by the younger generation.<sup>7</sup>*

**Dreyfus (2006a)**

Two teachers – one woman and one man – were interviewed in 2002 at an institution providing both basic education and vocational training in the suburbs of Dakar.<sup>8</sup>

The older teacher justifies her occasional and specific use of Wolof by her need to achieve her teaching objectives, whereas the younger teacher justifies bilingual classroom practice on its own terms.

### Profile 1: Mrs A

Mrs A is a nursery school teacher in her early 40s. She went to school in various towns in the north of the country, and completed her final year of high school at a *lycée* (high school) in Dakar. She became a teacher after having failed the high school diploma (*baccalauréat*). She understands and speaks a little Pulaar, Jola and Seereer (the last two languages she learned from her domestic workers in Dakar). She describes herself as 'good at maths, not in French'<sup>9</sup> during her school days. She learned French at school: 'I had to manage on my own, working with the syllabary'<sup>10</sup> and with limited means. Her illiterate mother speaks French a little. Mrs A's spoken French is fluent: 'We speak French well here.'<sup>11</sup> She says she speaks Wolof and French with her children: '*Le wolof, c'est la base, quoi !*'

('Wolof, it's the base, isn't it!'). She plans to open a nursery school in the district of Dakar where she lives. She says she was trained in a private school in a fairly wealthy neighbourhood in Dakar by a lady who had herself been trained in France, thereby admitting implicitly the value of this lineage.

In the Grade 1 class she teaches, she shows great creativity in the language sessions. However, naming exercises, along with repetition and translation drills, resumptions and corrections are constant, with a marked switching between Wolof and French. Mrs A makes the children speak and repeat in French in a rising/falling intonation and with a gesture to emphasise the newly introduced words which they then have to repeat. She uses the initiation-response-feedback/follow-up (IRF) pattern<sup>12</sup> recurrently. She only offers forms of standard French – no Senegalisms. Indeed, she purposefully separates the two languages, teaching the children to distinguish any Wolof words borrowed into French from standard French words. She declares: '*Le wolof+c'est trop proche du français++les gens escamotent les mots*' ('Wolof is too similar to French, people get the words wrong').<sup>13</sup> The difference must therefore be introduced: [sama sak] becomes *mon cartable* (my satchel), and she relies on the written form: [serbet] becomes *serviette*. The children correct one another and when they go back home, they also correct their mothers, relaying, in turn, a language model which has already been distilled by the classroom teacher. The languages in contact are always clearly separated, and the play of resumptions and repetitions always refers back to the written form of the language.

Mrs A thereby makes a clear and marked separation of linguistic systems, creating a divide and instituting a hierarchy in parallel to the diglossia which is all around. This perspective has been totally internalised by the teacher, who in these classroom interactions reproduces knowledge and routines which she inherited from her own school education and professional training. One could therefore say that she behaves as the mediator of an educational supernorm of a standardised form of French.

7. Translated from the original: '*Les plus âgés d'entre eux pratiquent plutôt une alternance "balisée" de codes, séparant nettement les systèmes linguistiques en présence, et les plus jeunes, un mélange de codes, proche des variétés linguistiques utilisées par les jeunes*' (Dreyfus, 2006a).
8. This institution is both a primary school and a vocational centre. It is answerable to both the Department of Justice and the Department of National Education. It has classes that give a formal education to the children of the neighbourhood and pre-professional training (clothes design, hairdressing, aviculture, automotive repair) to juvenile delinquents.
9. Original quotation: '*Bonne en mathématiques, pas en Français.*'
10. Original quotation: '*Je me débrouillais toute seule, avec le syllabaire.*'
11. Original quotation: '*Le français, c'est bien parlé ici.*'
12. A 'pattern' is an enunciative format which, in the case presented here, is a succession of formulations characterised by their form, their interactive sequence and their meaningful scope in the context.
13. Transcription symbols: +, ++, +++ indicate pauses of variable durations. The colon (:, ::, :::) indicates a lengthening, also of variable durations.

## Profile 2: B

B is in his early 30s and is a teacher in the agricultural technical unit in the same institution<sup>14</sup> for 15- to 20-year-old students in vocational education. He himself was trained by NGOs – Caritas, Enda Third World (Enda Tiers-monde) and World Vision International – and says he is ‘reproducing the same pedagogical project as the one [he] received’.<sup>15</sup> A Seereer, he says he has been speaking Wolof since starting secondary school. With his family he speaks French, Seereer, Wolof and also English (with those of his children reaching the end of their secondary education). He is mobile and claims to have ‘taught in all the regions of Senegal’.<sup>16</sup>

During this interview, carried out in French and in his classroom, at first B demonstrates a very formal, very organised and structured speech, talking about his teaching objectives. This suggests that he may be repeating terms and fragments of speech conveyed and transmitted by the NGOs who trained him. There is a certain vigilance, applied to both the structure and the content, and a development of a kind of oratorical art of spoken text, probably a result of the influence of the education he received.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, when I directly mentioned the issue of language alternation, B showed difficulty in putting together a rationale and resorted to interruptions, resumptions and hesitations.

Extract from the interview carried out in school with B (June 2002). Original (in French) on the left; English translation on the right.

Transcription symbols: +, ++, +++ indicate pauses of variable durations. The colon (:, ::, :::) indicates a lengthening, also of variable durations. The { indicates overlapping speech.

CJ: *Vos cours, vous les faites vous-même ?*

B: *Ouais*

CJ: *Ou vous êtes heu avec quelqu'un ?*

B: *Nan je fais mes cours moi-même + donc j'suis ...*

CJ: *Vous les faites en français ou bien en wolof ?*

B: *En français + en français et j'introduis un peu d'wolof + généralement en français en français pour que pour les initier à parler le français + parce que c'est bon d'apprendre à parler le le wolof, c'est c'est une base*

CJ: *Comment ?*

B: *Le wolof c'est bon ++ c'est c'est c'est bon + mais :: à la fin le gosse aura ptêt besoin d'écrire un petit projet, écrit, manuscrit pour qu'il puisse financer vous voyez l'initiation sur les dossiers les dossiers administratifs et tout :: comment faire une deman ::de comment faire une demande d'assistance technique un curriculum etc. etc. donc*

CJ: *Vous introduisez le français seulement pour l'écrit ou bien heu :: aussi à l'oral ?*

B: *Mmm*

CJ: Your lessons, do you do them yourself?

B: Yep

CJ: Or are you with another person?

B: No I do my lessons myself + so I'm ...

CJ: Do you conduct them in French or in Wolof?

B: In French + in French and I introduce a bit of Wolof + generally in French in French to introduce them to speaking in French + because it is good to learn to speak in Wolof, it is it is a base

CJ: How come?

B: Wolof is good ++ it's it's good + but :: at the end of the day the child may need to write a small-scale project, written, a written text so he can fund you see an introduction to the files the administrative files and all :: how to write an applica ::tion how to write an application for technical assistance a curriculum etc. etc. so

CJ: Do you introduce French only in writing or heu :: in speaking too?

B: Mmm

14. He had been teaching in this school for several years.

15. Original quotation: ‘Répercuter le même projet pédagogique que ce qu'il a reçu.’

16. Original quotation: ‘Avoir fait toutes les régions du Sénégal.’

17. Although we had not directly observed any courses of this type, Dreyfus and I formulated this hypothesis based on what B had told us about his background, the contrast between his various statements in the interview, a comparison of this interview with others collected in the same period, and our knowledge of the Senegalese environment.

CJ: Votre avis ?

B: Le wo dans l'oral + hein dans l'oral j'introduis le français dans l'oral + heu le wolof dans l'oral ++ mais ce qui est théorie généralement c'est :: ça valide tout quoi

CJ: Ça ?

B: Du touche du touche à tout quoi du touche à tout si :: parce que un vrai pédagogue n'est pas censé d'utiliser heu ; une même langue pour faire comprendre une leçon ++ moi j'aurais préféré même que les élèves comprennent ma langue maternelle + ce serait beaucoup plus facile de les expliquer ce que moi j'ai envie de leur faire faire

CJ: Qu'est-ce que vous avez comme langue maternelle ?

B: Moi j'ai je parle sérère {donc vous voyez ce serait beaucoup plus facile si tout le monde

CJ: {Ah très bien

B: Comprenait le sérère donc la formation serait beaucoup plus rapide et cela ne m'empêcherait pas de parler parce que quand vous parlez dans votre langue maternelle vous vous expliquez vous vous exprimez plus convenablement.

CJ: Your opinion?

B: Wo in speaking + eh in speaking I introduce French in speaking + er Wolof in speaking ++ but for theory generally it's :: it validates everything doesn't it

CJ: It?

B: Use everything use everything right use everything if :: because a true pedagogue is not supposed to use er; the same language to get a lesson understood ++ me I would even have preferred the pupils understand my mother tongue + it would be a lot easier for me to explain what I want them to do

CJ: What is your mother tongue?

B: I speak Seereer {so you see it would have been a lot easier if everybody

CJ: {Ah I see

B: Understood Seereer then the training would be completed much more quickly and that wouldn't stop me speaking because when you use your mother tongue you explain you express yourself better.

Changing languages is part of what the teacher presents as a pedagogical approach, but turns out to be rather makeshift in nature, what B called '*touche à tout*'.

Indeed, B had underlined that 'it is good to learn to speak in Wolof, it is it is a base'. It was impossible for him to say otherwise, on account of being a Seereer,<sup>18</sup> and of being nearly the same age as his students. French was perceived as an extra, for its functional purpose in writing; this purpose was not so much to teach norms, as to enable the young people in his class to succeed in writing up a micro-project. Besides, although everything written on the board was in French, everything said in the classroom was in Wolof, except for some very specific activities requiring technical vocabulary.

We also noted that, generally:

*The use of French is not as standardised among younger teachers who resort more often to urban Wolof and to language alternation in their relationships with their colleagues and within the classroom.*

**Dreyfus (2006b: p. 80)**

These two people illustrate the fact that the teaching workforce in Senegal consists of a diversity of individuals whose characteristics, plans and practices need to be better understood.

### Recurrent aspects of teacher-student interactions in the classroom in a bilingual context: Ritualised interaction models

Our hypothesis, also supported by more recent studies,<sup>19</sup> was that teachers tend to favour the same interactive teaching formats, whatever the languages used for that purpose, because they reproduce teaching styles with which they are familiar. They are therefore inferred to be the vectors of a culture of scholastic transmission, which is linked to their own trajectory, which teaching circles they frequent, their professional practice, and the social construct of their rationalisations and ideologies in their discourse, for example.

18. A great number of Seereers have become wolofised through their contact with Wolofs.

19. These observations were made by Juillard in 2016 and 2017 in a Jola-French bilingual class in an elementary school in Ziguinchor and in a rural school in Essyl, Lower Casamance.

These formats – these inherited and reproduced models – need to be identified. In our 2002 survey (cf. Juillard et al., 2005), we found highly ritualised classroom management techniques in both formal and informal education, whatever the language used. Indeed, the ubiquity of an interactive format, seen in different grades at school and irrespective of the subjects taught or the tasks being set, is emphasised in several articles by Dreyfus (2006a and 2006b). This format is characterised, to quote Dreyfus, 'by a sequential form organised around a series of adjacent pairs, of the question/answer type or of ternary exchanges of the initiation-response-feedback/follow-up (IRF) type'. These utterances are contiguous, made by two different speakers: the teacher and the student (or students). The initial utterance exerts a very strong constraint on the following utterance. This ritualisation of the interactive format also occurs via the teacher's pre-allocation of speaking slots, via the modalities for opening and closing the interaction, and via the repetition of certain sequences, etc.

This takes place quite regularly, as a 'pattern' of communication (Dreyfus, 2006b: p. 80). The students memorise it and it can be said to be part and parcel of

school learning. Could the important role given to the memorisation of the forms and structures of spoken text indicate a link or resonance to the habitus (in the Bourdieusian sense of the word) of maraboutic education?<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, in 2002, in an informal school in the Ginaw Rails neighbourhood of Dakar, I witnessed the astonishing theatricalisation, almost sung like a monotonous chant, of a grammar lesson based on a very performative model, with the teacher acting as the conductor and the pupils knowing and performing their score admirably well. This highly ritualised interaction organised around grammatical forms and 'correct' syntactic constructions is not, in my opinion, the best way of acquiring linguistic knowledge which can be applied to speaking activities unrelated to the written form. This model of ritualised interaction functions as the unique place and means for acquiring the verbal and discursive forms being presented. I also observed it in educational classes described as bilingual in Ziguinchor in 2016.

Extract from an interaction recorded in Ziguinchor in 2016, in a Grade 3 bilingual Jola–French class. Original (in French) on the left; English translation on the right.

*Communication orale* (Oral communication) is written on the board, and charts the activity in progress.

From a comic book story about the disappearance of a sheep bought for Tabaski<sup>21</sup> (six pages), which is in the Grade 3 textbook, the classroom teacher starts by telling the story in Jola, then she makes the 'transfer' into French.

The interaction format with the pupils is as follows: adjacent pairs with contrastive intonation patterns.

Teacher: *Les enfants sont très con- ?* / [rising intonation]  
 Pupils, all together: *-tents \* [falling intonation]  
 Teacher: *Le mouton est un herbi- /*  
 Pupils: *-vore \*  
 Teacher: *Ils vont à la /*  
 Pupils: *mosquée \*  
 Teacher: *pour pri- /*  
 Pupils: *-er \*  
 Teacher: *la fête du /*  
 Pupils: *mouton \*  
 Teacher: *le mouton a dispa- /*  
 Pupils: *-ru \*  
 Etc.

Teacher: The children are very hap-? / [rising intonation]  
 Pupils, all together: -py \ [falling intonation]  
 Teacher: The sheep is a herbi-/  
 Pupils: -vore \  
 Teacher: They are going to the/  
 Pupils: mosque \  
 Teacher: to pr- /  
 Pupils: -ay \  
 Teacher: the feast of /  
 Pupils: sheep \  
 Teacher: the sheep has disap-/  
 Pupils: -peared \  
 Etc.

20. Friederike Lüpke has reacted on this point and agreed with the probable importance of Quranic training and education in teachers' profiles.

21. In West African and Central African countries, Tabaski is the name given to Eid al-Adha, the most important Islamic holiday.

<p>The children only complete a single word or part of the missing word.</p> <p>Then a few children act out the scene. They shyly mime and speak in Jola.</p>	<p>The teacher has a very loud and projecting voice, but the actors can hardly be heard.</p> <p>Then, the teacher says:</p>
<p>Teacher: <i>On va faire le transfert en fran-/</i></p> <p>Pupils: -çais \</p> <p>Teacher: <i>répétez + papa a acheté un mouton +Vous êtes con-/</i></p> <p>Pupils: -tents \</p> <p>Teacher: <i>merci pa-/ ?</i></p> <p>Pupils: -pa\</p> <p>Teacher: <i>Marie donne le mouton à manger (sic) + ensuite [keski] se passe / Ils vont à la /</i></p> <p>Pupils: mosqué\</p> <p>Teacher: <i>le mouton a dispa-/</i></p> <p>Pupils: -ru\</p> <p>Teacher: <i>les enfants sont tristes \</i></p>	<p>Teacher: We are going to transfer to Fr-/</p> <p>Pupils: -ench \</p> <p>Teacher: repeat + Daddy has bought a sheep + You are ha-/</p> <p>Pupils: -py \</p> <p>Teacher: thank you, Da-/ ?</p> <p>Pupils: -ddy\</p> <p>Teacher: Marie gives the sheep to eat (sic) + and then what happens / they go to the /</p> <p>Pupils: mosque\</p> <p>Teacher: the sheep has disap-/</p> <p>Pupils: -peared\</p> <p>Teacher: the children are sad \</p>
<p>The teacher employs a falling intonation, for the first time. This marks the end of the activity.</p>	

As highlighted in the planned action research report mentioned above (Juillard et al., 2005: 44), 'the highly stereotyped or ritualised nature of the interaction reduces the range of communicative resources, but also language and discursive resources, by using relatively simple syntactic structures' which are also typical of written language.

A certain ritualisation of the use of French in the classroom, including when there is a 'transfer' from L1 to L2, probably has an effect on the children's language production, which remains very standardised, despite a potential for bilingualism, and which deviates significantly from non-scholastic uses which are marked by alternation between French and African languages or by an emerging form of local French.

Lastly, we must underline the fact that it is of course possible to observe uses of French in the school context other than the ritualised model we describe above.

## Concluding proposals

The following proposals are the result of the above description and analysis.

- Any research about teachers and their practice inside and outside the classroom, in the school context, should lead to fruitful discussions between researchers and teachers which are likely to develop both teachers' practice and their perceptions of their practice.
- Researchers need to be able to understand teachers' objectives, expectations, difficulties and needs.
- Teachers often make the request for researchers and the academic world to support them and engage in a (currently non-existent) dialogue with them.
- All stakeholders must become aware of their practices and attitudes.
- This is also the case for researchers in the field.
- Reviewing what has happened during the day and conducting a critical assessment of actions and discourse should lead to an evolution of classroom practice and perceptions of that practice, the languages in contact, and transmitted norms and models.

How do we engage stakeholders, both personally and collectively, in the context of their institution? We must, first of all, know them better and understand their practice better. This should be done in partnership with school inspectors. That is what we need to invest in order to build a properly managed, co-ordinated and successful system of bilingual education.

*Translated from the French original by the British Senegalese Institute Translation Unit, Dakar, Senegal, and Philip Harding-Esch.*

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## 12. Mind the gap: Exploring the difference between language practice and language policy in Sierra Leone

Ann Rossiter

### Abstract

This paper uses evidence from a study in Sierra Leone of how teachers use their language repertoire to try to increase student learning when the official medium of instruction (English) is not a familiar language for their students and, frequently, themselves. Findings from almost 60 classrooms (sampled at all levels of the system) showed that in every case teachers and students shared a common language other than English and that fewer than 20 per cent of teachers used only English in the classroom. Although they have received no training in multilingual teaching, their language selection was purposeful. Understanding and demonstrating learning in English remained the target, with local languages used in specific ways to achieve this.

### Introduction and context

Sierra Leone is still near the bottom of many of the development indicators following the 1991–2002 civil war and the 2014–15 Ebola outbreak. Huge efforts have been made by educational donors to help meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of primary school enrolment for all. However, it is only recently that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has switched its concern and funding to focus on what happens inside the classroom and the quality of education (Government of Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2018). This innovation has been supported by Global Partnership for Education, which is led by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID, as it then was).

This chapter reports a small-scale research study, funded by the British Council, undertaken in the context of concern that students in Sierra Leone, at all levels, are failing to achieve successful learning outcomes at least in part because of inadequate language skills. This concern is expressed by the public, in the media, among employers, at the Ministry of Education and among the NGOs and donors who support the education system (UNESCO, 2013; Conteh-Morgan, 1997).

A direct link was made between poor English skills, particularly in reading comprehension, and unsatisfactory performance across the curriculum in a recent analysis of West African Examinations Council results (Feika, 2019). These exams, taken at the end of junior and senior secondary education by students from a number of West African countries formerly colonised by Britain, are set in English and allow direct comparison of national results. Sierra Leone – in spite of its proud history as ‘the Athens of West Africa’, with its 190-year-old Forah Bay College (present-day University of Sierra Leone) once graduating doctors and academics for senior posts throughout British West Africa – now sees its candidates come well behind those from Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria: a comparison of results in 2008–10, for example, showed Nigeria to outperform Sierra Leone ten-fold across all 15 subjects (Bangura, 2019). In results published in 2019, more than 95 per cent of students taking the senior-level exams were said to have failed to achieve the five credits necessary for university entrance (*ibid.*).

Until the publication in 2016 of Trudell's ground-breaking study for UNICEF of the impact of language policy and practice on learning in 14 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (Trudell, 2016), little had been done to investigate how the gap between language policy and practice affects success in classroom learning. As Desai and Milligan, reporting their research in South Africa in the 12th Language and Development Conference in Dakar, underline: ‘Language remains an invisible factor in current discourses on education.’<sup>1</sup>

In Sierra Leone, the relationship between language policy and practice has not been focused on by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology or its development partners. Presenting this research study in a forum for the ministry and development partners<sup>2</sup> was a first step in underlining its importance and the need for action.

In this chapter I begin by describing the role and status of English and other languages in Sierra Leone and the reasons why mother tongue-based multilingual education is not widespread while English is the established official

1. Desai, Z & Milligan, L. Write or skryf but don't bhala: The invisibility of African languages in formal education. Unpublished paper presented at 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 28 November 2017.
2. British Council Forum ‘Languages of Learning: a Situation Report’, 24 March 2017, British Council, Freetown, Sierra Leone. Delegates included directors of secondary and tertiary education of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; provincial deputy directors of education; heads of the Institute of Education; English department heads from training colleges and universities; representatives of the EU, World Bank, UNICEF and DFID delegations; and the director of the British Council in Sierra Leone.

medium of instruction. I go on to describe the small-scale study that was carried out to see how teachers' classroom practice may differ from policy, including the underlying hypotheses and the methodology used. I report the findings of the study in terms of teachers' and learners' language knowledge, teachers' use of language repertoire, teachers' language strategies, learners' use of language, and longitudinal change in language use through the different phases of education. Finally, with reference to other studies, including research presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, I discuss a series of conclusions relevant to education policy and language planning, with a focus on empowering teachers to make meaningful choices and aligning policy and practice.

### Note on terminology

This chapter describes the interplay between English, as the medium of instruction; Krio, the nationally used lingua franca of Sierra Leone; Themne and Mende, two of the most widely spoken indigenous languages in the country; and other indigenous languages.<sup>3</sup>

- In Sierra Leone, the terms 'indigenous' or 'African' languages are commonly used to describe the language of one of the indigenous ethnic groups of Sierra Leone, such as Mende or Themne. In this chapter, the term 'indigenous' is used to refer to these languages.
- Krio has an ambiguous status; as a Creole it is both the native language of the Krio population – descendants of freed slaves resettled in a British colony – but is also a lingua franca throughout the population of Sierra Leone. To demarcate Krio as a lingua franca it is named separately (as 'Krio') in this chapter, i.e. it is not placed under the 'indigenous' language label.
- 'Home language' is used in Sierra Leone to refer to a language with which the child is familiar through use in daily life (especially in the home), although, especially after the dislocations of the civil war, this may not be the dominant language of the locality. The term 'mother tongue' is not generally used, as in many families parents are from different ethnic groups and speak different languages, and its use is avoided here.

### Language policy in Sierra Leone: The role and status of English and other languages

Like the majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, on independence Sierra Leone adopted a language policy that retained the language of the colonial power, in this case English, as the official language and the medium of teaching and learning. The post-independence revaluing of local languages and UNESCO's endorsement of the

use of the mother tongue as a human right led to the home language being mandated for use as an enabling language in the first three years of primary education. However, although this provision still exists, after an initial enthusiasm in the 1970s and 1980s there has been little material produced in languages other than English that could be used for teaching, and although some of the predominant indigenous languages are studied in secondary school and higher education, no teachers are trained to teach in any language other than English.

English, therefore, has a dual role in the education system. Firstly, it is a subject of study from the first year of primary school. Called 'language arts' in primary and junior secondary schools, it is taught through a curriculum that combines language study and literature. Secondly, English is also the official medium of instruction for teaching and learning all other subjects across the curriculum at school and in higher education. English is the language of teacher training, curriculum documents, teaching support materials and exams.

However, while language policy has remained unaltered, socio-cultural changes have limited the use of English in the national discourse. War and social change have increased population mobility and concentrated almost 40 per cent of the people in the capital, Freetown, encouraging the development of Krio as a lingua franca within Sierra Leone. Krio, an English-based Creole, influenced by French, Portuguese, Yoruba and other indigenous languages, is the mother tongue of the minority population descended from the 'liberated Africans', who settled in Freetown over 200 years ago.

Krio has not replaced other mother tongues but is now known by an estimated 95 per cent of Sierra Leoneans (Akíntúndé Oyétádé & Fashole-Luke, 2008), and is therefore the second language of the vast majority of the population. It is used in almost all exchanges between Sierra Leoneans of different ethnicities and has arguably become a marker of being a Sierra Leonean (*ibid.*). It has, however, invariably been described by those who use it as 'not a proper language' or 'broken English'; reasons offered for its low status in discussion and confirmed in a literature review include its lack of a literature, that it has no single recognised orthography, and that it is 'childish' – referring to features like reduplication and simplification both phonetic and grammatical (*ibid.*; Finney, n.d.).

In addition to Krio most people know the language of at least one of the two main ethnic groups. Mende is used by the people in and from the south and Themne in the north. If neither of these is their mother tongue, then the language people use within the family may be one of a dozen or so others, such as Kissy, Kono, Limba, Soso or Fullah. Sierra Leoneans are definitely good language learners, adept at codeswitching according to context.

3. For an overview of languages in Sierra Leone and their use in education, written before the civil war, see Sengova (1987).

This habitual use of other languages is, however, counterbalanced by a recognition of the role English has developed globally, as the dominant international language, and the language of the internet age. Milligan and Tikly (2016), in their analysis of the widespread use of English as a medium of instruction in postcolonial contexts, cite the consensus of many applied linguists linking this predominance to 'a widespread view that proficiency in English is a key indicator for expected economic development'. For Sierra Leoneans, the ability to use English well remains a marker of status, acknowledged as the key to a good (international) education and a well-paid career. As an example of this discourse, the blogger Language Critic enumerates the advantages that only competence in English conveys in Sierra Leone, on a popular English language learning website:<sup>4</sup> 'prestige and enviable social status', 'assurance of a better life', 'higher education', 'appointments in the civil service, government departments and NGOs' and 'travel'. However, actual use of English is restricted to 'formal business, governmental and media purposes' (Sawe, 2017).

Attaining the full and flexible command of English possessed by the role models of earlier generations (and still displayed by debating stars in international competitions) has become harder to achieve: anecdotal evidence suggests that many students (and teachers) commonly use English only within the classroom, if talking to a foreigner or at an official event; and many experienced and highly qualified teachers have retired, used their qualification to obtain a well-paying job outside education or gone overseas, thus decreasing the proportion of teachers with good language skills.

At the same time, pursuit of the MDGs has caused a tremendous expansion in numbers of learners, especially in early primary education, stretching resources and increasing the proportion of students from poor educational backgrounds whose parents have not mastered English (Government of Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2018). 'Good English' remains a symbol of educational achievement: exam results and sector reviews indicate that an increasing number of teachers and students fall short.

Although evidence-based research has changed thinking about the best ways of developing school-age students' competence in a foreign language internationally, this discussion has not been heard in Sierra Leone. Acquiring literacy first in the mother tongue has been shown in many studies to make the subsequent learning of other languages easier and thus increase the possibility of effective learning through those languages. Zafeirakou (2015) reports field evidence from a World Bank-sponsored project in nearby Gambia currently demonstrating this; but World Bank policy being country-specific, this mother tongue literacy project is not being replicated in Sierra Leone.

Internationally, the view of multilingualism has also changed. The British Council's study of multilingualism in Europe (Extra & Yagmur, 2012) defines the ability of knowing how to use more than one language as making a person 'language rich', able to choose and use the appropriate language to achieve the best possible clarity in communication in a particular context. In the classroom, a student's existing language knowledge is increasingly regarded as an aid to learning, rather than 'interference', and the teacher's planned use of a language with which the learners are familiar (familiar language) 'can be a bridge to learning a new one' – as Canagarajah (2011) argues in his paper on 'translanguaging' in the classroom. The British Council, in its recent position paper (Simpson, 2017), presents language as a rights issue:

*Students have the right to access both the school curriculum in their own or a familiar language and to receive quality English language learning experiences.*

In Sierra Leone, however, as in other African countries, parents who can afford to do so send their children to private English-medium primary schools or even kindergartens. Schools, similarly anxious that their learners do well, have in some instances developed their own language-related policies, the most common being to forbid the use of any language other than English in the classroom or even on the school premises. Use of mother tongue or Krio is penalised, sometimes by a fine such as making the offender buy a bag of packs of water.

## The small-scale research study

Mtana and O-saki (2017), writing of Tanzania, conclude that, 'because the language policies do not match well with the linguistic landscape of the country, there is a mismatch between the existing policy and practice in school'. Policy, be it determined by government or school, is only one factor influencing the minute-by-minute language choices of teachers and students inside the classroom. The small-scale study described in this chapter aimed to provide a snapshot of how teachers and students are actually using language in teaching and learning in Sierra Leonean classrooms.

## Methodology, hypothesis and strategies

The study, based on the hypothesis that teachers' language choice is meaningful and directly influencing student learning (Polio & Duff, 1994; Lee & Levine, 2018), aimed to show where, why and with what result teachers' classroom practice differs from policy. To get a true picture, it was important to observe what the teachers normally do in class, something that is notoriously difficult to achieve.

4. See 'English, French, and Arabic Languages in Sierra Leone' on the Antimoon blog: [www.antimoon.com/forum/t15484.htm](http://www.antimoon.com/forum/t15484.htm)

Two strategies were adopted in an attempt to lessen 'the observer effect'. The first was to employ, as the three field researchers, experienced English language teacher trainers – in many instances a familiar presence in the classroom they observed, or at least known to the teacher. Asking them to observe the whole of a lesson allowed class and teacher to become used to their presence. As teacher trainers and linguists, familiar with observing classroom teaching, they were able to identify not only at what point a teacher switched language but what teaching function caused the change of language, and were able to assess the effect.

The second strategy was to ask the researchers to observe someone who was identified, usually by the school principal, as 'a good teacher'. While 'good' is of course a very imprecise, qualitative categorisation, its value for this research was two-fold: first, that the teachers observed felt positive about the experience and were reassured that their way of teaching was considered so valuable that they would see no need to change their practice for the observation; second, that the teachers' practice could be considered effective, indeed was considered effective by the school leaders, and that their choices of language (along with other choices) contributed to student learning.

Data collection was carried out in 60 classrooms over a two-week period in the trainers' college locations (the capital Freetown, Makeni in the north of the country and Bo in the south). Data was collected from all levels of the education system: lower primary, upper primary, junior secondary school, senior secondary school, teacher training college and university. Fifty per cent of the data was collected in language arts/English lessons and 50 per cent in other subjects across the curriculum. Fifty per cent of the school sites were in urban areas and 50 per cent in rural or peri-urban settings.

The data was recorded on standardised forms<sup>5</sup> identifying, for teachers and learners, the type of language interaction, the frequency with which it occurred in the lesson, and the language used. After observing each lesson, the researchers were asked to make an overall comment on the class, and hold a short discussion with teachers and students, explaining the purpose of the observation and finding out the language profile of each class: the range of languages spoken, the numbers speaking the different languages, and what common languages teachers and students shared.

## The findings

### Language knowledge

While no attempt was made to define what 'knowing' a language means, the data (Table 1) clearly shows that all teachers were happy to describe themselves as at least

bilingual, knowing both English and Krio, and a very high percentage (88 per cent) as trilingual in English, Krio and one or both of the two most widely used indigenous languages (Mende or Themne).

**Table 1: Teachers' language knowledge**

Teachers know English and Krio	100%
Teachers know English, Krio and both/either Mende and/or Themne	88%
Teachers know English, Krio and one other indigenous language	59%
Teachers know English, Krio and two or more other indigenous languages	32%
Teachers know only English and Krio	9%

Sierra Leonean classrooms are shown to be language rich. The average number of languages spoken by students per classroom was six: urban, secondary- and tertiary-level classrooms in general showed the widest variety of languages spoken.

Classrooms also demonstrated a high degree of homogeneity of language knowledge. In over two-thirds of the classes students shared the same indigenous language, and in almost 90 per cent learners knew Krio (Table 2).

**Table 2: Learners' language knowledge**

Classes where all learners speak the same indigenous language	13%
Classes where majority of learners speak the same indigenous language	70%
Classes where all learners speak Krio	89%
Classes where no student speaks Krio	2%

### Teachers' use of language repertoire

We also found that in all classes, the teachers and students shared a common language which could be used as a resource in learning English. In 95 per cent of classes the common language was Krio. Furthermore, in over 60 per cent of classes the teacher shared the home language of the majority of the students – a figure which rises to over 90 per cent outside the Freetown area, showing that the home language is likely to be a shared resource in classrooms in rural communities.

5. The lesson observation protocol was a simple matrix designed by the research team, who trained the field researchers in methods of completion.

Cutting across educational levels, and the divide between English as 'language arts' and as medium of instruction across the curriculum, teachers were found to draw on their language repertoire in six different ways (see Table 3).

**Table 3:** Classroom language use

Only English (Note: In some schools any use of a language other than English is barred and punished)	18%
English and Krio	38%
English and Krio and home language	36%
English and home language	5%
English and other foreign language (Arabic) and Krio	2%
English, Krio and other foreign language and home language(s)	2%

Fewer than one in five teachers used only English in the classroom. In almost three-quarters of the classes (74 per cent) Krio was used to support the teaching/learning process. In more than a third of the classes (36 per cent) teaching was multilingual, the teachers moving between English, Krio and the home language. Observer notes record how the division was made in one lesson: 'Reading/reciting rhymes and alphabet in

both English and Mende and class management in Krio.' In this instance Krio is seen to retain its 'real-life' status as the language of interpersonal communication outside the family, with the home language, Mende in this case, being used to relate new to existing knowledge. In three lower primary classes the home language was used extensively, particularly in one maths class, although English remained the target language. However, it is interesting to see that the use of a supporting language did not decrease at senior education levels, although Krio, the lingua franca, was more likely to be used than a regional home or familiar language in tertiary institutions.

### Teachers' language strategies

The data indicates that although teachers have received no training in multilingual teaching, their choice is purposeful, being clearly linked to the teaching function. Understanding and demonstrating learning in English remains the target, with languages familiar to teachers and learners being used by the majority of teachers to help achieve this.

Analysis of teachers' strategies shows that the vast majority of the lessons remained instances of teacher-oriented whole-class teaching. Six main teaching strategies were used, the four most frequent being oral: introducing the lesson topic, explaining a new concept, asking questions to test student understanding and managing the classroom. Their use provided the greater part of the learners' exposure to English, and the material from which students learned (see Table 4).

**Table 4:** Most widely used strategies

Strategy	Percentage of lessons using this strategy in the medium of English	Percentage of lessons using this strategy in the medium of Krio	Percentage of lessons using this strategy in the medium of the indigenous language (Mende or Themne)
Introduce the lesson topic	95%	7%	2%
Explain a new concept	70%	38%	16%
Ask questions to test student understanding	70%	21%	13%
Perform classroom management	55%	23%	9%
Write examples/texts on the board	54%	0%	0%
Read aloud what is written on the board/in the teacher's book	45%	0%	0%

Note: Percentage totals may come to more than 100 per cent as lessons may include the use of more than one language.

The data clearly indicates that the most frequent use of Krio or an indigenous language (Themne or Mende in these classes) was to provide accessible oral input to help students learn new concepts or ways of working. Similarly, although less frequent, simplification of the learning task occurred in the use of a more familiar language in questions to check students' understanding and in classroom management. It is likely that few teachers are literate in their own home language. They may have been introduced to its orthography, usually Latin script based with phonetic symbols to indicate tonal variation, during education or training.<sup>6</sup> There remains, however, an almost complete lack of reading materials in indigenous languages.<sup>7</sup> It is written English, therefore, that functions both as the target form for written communication (e.g. in exams) and as a support for learning. In the data, writing was only in English in all but one class. In the absence of textbooks or almost any other written material in the classrooms observed, the teacher's text provided the learners' only reading practice.

A photograph of one teacher's board indicates the teacher's own written English proficiency. Its transcription (Figure 1) shows errors of spelling,

**Table 5:** Learners' most frequent activities by language

Activities	Key:					
	Number of instances of the given activity					
	Percentage of all activities in this language (a)					
	Percentage of all activities recorded (b)					
Activities	English	Krio	Mende	Themne	Other	Total
1. Answer questions in chorus	164 33.0% (a) 18.7% (b)	61 28.5% (a) 6.9% (b)	53 56.4% (a) 6.0% (b)	8 14.5% (a) 0.9% (b)	7 36.8% (a) 0.8% (b)	293 N/A (a) 33.4% (b)
2. Answer questions individually	107 21.6% (a) 12.2% (b)	39 18.2% (a) 4.4% (b)	5 5.3% (a) 0.6% (b)	18 32.7% (a) 2.1% (b)	10 52.6% (a) 1.1% (b)	179 N/A (a) 20.4% (b)
3. Read aloud	92 18.5% (a) 10.5% (b)	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	92 N/A (a) 10.5% (b)
4. Copy from board	44 8.9% (a) 5.0% (b)	5 2.3% (a) 0.6% (b)	- - -	- - -	- - -	49 N/A (a) 5.6% (b)

6. 'A UNESCO report on the potential use of indigenous languages in education published in 1981, Themne, Mende, Krio, and Limba were selected for standardisation and the development of orthographies so that they could be used as mediums of education in primary schools and taught as subjects in later years [...] there are also attempts to produce literature in the four languages' (Akintundé Oyetadé & Fashole-Luke, 2008).
7. 'The ultimate drawback or handicap is the complete lack of literacy materials for the implementation of the four local languages in our educational system' (Bai-Sheka, 2017).

capitalisation, concord, syntax and cohesion as well as being unnecessarily complex stylistically for the learners:

**Figure 1:** One teacher's board

*First aid kits: It is the kit that contain medicine and other items used in carrying out First aid. A simple kit may contain in the following items: Guaze.....*

Learners are frequently instructed to read aloud and copy what the teacher writes on the board (in 60 per cent of the classes in our data), as the basis of their learning.

### Learners' use of language

The data (Table 5) clearly shows that students are developing only a restricted range of language skills despite using mostly English when they speak, read or write (nearly 60 per cent of all instances of language use observed).

**Table 5:** Learners' most frequent activities by language (continued)

Activities	Key:					
	Number of instances of the given activity					
	Percentage of all activities in this language (a)					
Percentage of all activities recorded (b)						
Activities	English	Krio	Mende	Themne	Other	Total
5. Ask questions	39	16	-	2	2	59
	7.9% (a)	7.5% (a)		3.6% (a)	10.5% (a)	N/A (a)
	4.4% (b)	1.8% (b)		0.2% (b)	0.2% (b)	6.7% (b)
6. Talk to partner/ pair work	25	84	36	21	-	166
	5.0% (a)	39.3% (a)	38.2% (a)	38.2% (a)		N/A (a)
	2.8% (b)	9.6% (b)	4.1% (b)	2.4% (b)		18.9% (b)
7. Read silently	12	N/A	-	-	-	12
	2.4% (a)					N/A (a)
	1.4% (b)					1.4% (b)
8. Present information/ findings	7	4	-	1	-	12
	1.4% (a)	1.9% (a)		1.8% (a)		N/A (a)
	0.8% (b)	0.5% (b)		0.1% (b)		1.4% (b)
9. Group work	6	5	-	5	-	16
	1.2% (a)	2.3% (a)		9.1% (a)		N/A (a)
	0.7% (b)	0.6% (b)		0.6% (b)		1.8% (b)
Total	496	214	94	55	19	878
	99.9% (a)	100% (a)	99.9% (a)	99.9% (a)	99.9% (a)	N/A (a)
	56.5% (b)	24.4% (b)	10.7% (b)	6.3% (b)	2.2% (b)	100% (b)

Answering questions in chorus remained by far the learners' most common use of English in the classroom (almost one-third of all activities in English). Answering the teacher's questions in chorus or individually remained the dominant learning activity when languages other than English were used (47 per cent of all activities in Krio, 47 per cent in Themne and 62 per cent in Mende). It is clear, however, that in student-initiated classroom talk to a partner or in pair work, the use of Krio, in particular, or of a local indigenous language was a common choice. In data obtained from one region, greater use of learner-centred practice was reflected in the teacher's adoption of different language strategies and a corresponding change in learner performance. In these classes learners were found to initiate speech in English and Krio, and use English spontaneously in presenting the findings of group discussion, exchanging information with the teacher who was writing on the board.

### Longitudinal change in language use

Summarising the researchers' observations by educational level, we can see that the use of teachers' and students' language repertoires changes as the learners' ability to operate independently in English increases (Table 6). However, it should be noted that this progression in English is a result of high drop-out rates at each stage of education, rather than generalised progress for a majority of students. Progress through the education system depends on the student passing public exams at the end of each level, with English as a compulsory subject. Low pass rates cause high drop-out rates at each stage. Entry to university is dependent on a credit pass in the secondary school-leaving exam (WASSCE) in English, maths and three other subjects. Again, 'abysmal' pass rates are a cause for concern (World Bank, 2013). In 2011, for example, while 99 per cent of candidates took the English language exam, only 12 per cent obtained a credit pass (*ibid.*). In theory, therefore, students who successfully reach tertiary level should have a high level of competency in English.

**Table 6:** Classroom practice by educational level (all citations from researcher protocols)

<b>Lower primary</b>	At this level teachers are seen to use English, Krio and other home languages (most frequently Mende and Themne) to help learners understand. Even in classes where the school policy is not to allow pupils to use languages other than English, teachers use Krio and other languages to explain the meaning of words and expressions, and check learners' understanding. In other schools the local indigenous language and/or Krio are 'used alongside English', sometimes 'almost equally' and in other cases 'predominating'. One observer commented: 'For every explanation in English there is an explanation or interpretation in Mende.'
<b>Upper primary</b>	At this level, in schools where it is permitted, teachers are still seen to be operating in two or three languages in different combinations according to area: 'English and Krio used side by side to enhance active class participation and for effective learning'; 'much of the lesson was done in Limba and Krio'. However, the use of written English is seen to restrict language activity: 'Teacher dominated the lesson having written the text on the board, read it aloud, asked pupils to read and then copy. Very little use of/reference to local language.'
<b>Junior secondary</b>	There seems to be considerable variation between schools, with the use of Krio and the local indigenous language on a continuum from 'never', through 'seldom used', 'occasional use', to 'used alongside', and one lesson in which 'most of the teaching was done in Themne'. The use of a familiar language to give effective explanation in presenting new concepts and to explain a story written in English was pointed out.
<b>Senior secondary</b>	Observers noted less frequent use of the local indigenous language and/or Krio, but also noted that when it is used it increases learner participation. 'Use of lots of local language expression to explain concepts and clarify issues, making lesson very exciting and centred on the learner.'
<b>Tertiary</b>	At tertiary level, although in many classes teachers' use of English is extensive, intermittent use of Krio is found helpful in explaining difficult concepts, presenting new ideas and working through some exercises – again, it is seen as leading to increased participation.

Note: Citations sometimes use the term 'local language' to designate both Krio and/or the local indigenous language.

As the comments in Table 6 illustrate, although English predominates at senior levels, the use of the local indigenous language or Krio was linked to increased understanding of new concepts and participation in the lesson.

## Conclusions

Although these conclusions are based on a limited set of data from Sierra Leone, they are supported by several discussions and presentations at the 12th Language and Development Conference in Dakar, which described other contexts where the education system, at different levels, utilises a language other than the learners' and teachers' mother tongue as the medium of instruction. For example, research in South Africa (Nomlomo, 2017)<sup>8</sup> and Tanzania (Barrett et al., 2017;<sup>9</sup> William & Juma, 2017<sup>10</sup>) underlines the importance of students being familiar with the language of instruction, and studies of interventions with refugees continuing education in a language other than their own highlight the universal value of translanguaging (Wiseman, this volume).

Even when language policies prescribe the use of a particular language, in their practice teachers will use the autonomy of the classroom to select the one they think best helps their students learn. Empowering teachers to make principled, planned choices of which language to use and when, and understanding the consequences of their choice, needs to be an area of their professional development.

For much of the time, and particularly in higher-level classes and in teacher-fronted teaching, the official medium of instruction will be the language used in the classroom. Where there are few or no textbooks, it is the teacher's use of that language, in speech and writing, that becomes the pupils' main input. Students' learning is severely handicapped if the teacher's communicative competence is low.

In clarifying the British Council perspective on the use of English as medium of instruction in countries where it is not a first language/mother tongue, Simpson (2017) underlines the importance of:

*Dealing successfully with the [second, or learnt language] proficiency gap that constrains pupils' ability to learn and display subject knowledge in English – and teachers' capacity to deliver the curriculum in the language.*

Ensuring that teachers are proficient in the use of the language of instruction as a teaching tool has to be a priority of any education system. Focusing language training in the teacher training colleges on developing competence in the pedagogic-linguistic oral skills (explaining, defining, eliciting, checking, encouraging, etc.), as well as reading and writing in these languages, will undoubtedly be more effective than generalised 'language improvement'. This suggests a review of language courses in the teacher training colleges, and the inclusion of language in pedagogical training for teachers/lecturers working in secondary and higher education.

Rather than limiting written input to the teacher's reproduction of often outdated texts or those written for native speakers, textbooks in the official language are needed which benefit from initiatives such as the language supportive textbook and training projects in Tanzania (Mtana & O-saki, 2017) and projects in Rwanda (Milligan et al., 2017) where materials are specifically written in clear, straightforward English with a local language glossary.

This research suggests that even when discouraged from doing so, teachers instinctively use languages more familiar to themselves and to their students to help their students learn. The use of familiar languages encourages students to participate more actively in the lessons, and although this cannot be linked in such a short study to greater learning, this can be considered a likely result of increased involvement and motivation. The more highly the teachers (and society) value indigenous languages and lingua francas, the better their knowledge of the way they work, the richer their vocabulary and the better their skill in using them, the more effective the interventions will be. This is particularly important for teachers at primary level where the familiar language may be officially mandated as an 'enabling language', either becoming for a time the medium of instruction or being drawn on extensively as a support language. Formal study of their own languages and their use as a teaching tool during teacher training must be a prerequisite. Moreover, as Desai and Milligan (2017)<sup>11</sup> argue, 'the more we start using local languages the more they will develop'. Developing the power of the non-official languages to act as vehicles for learning will widen access for many inside and outside the classroom.

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9. Barrett, AM, Mtana, N & O-Saki, KM. Developing sustainable STEM for empowering learners through LSTT trials: lessons learned from a bilingual approach to science teaching in early secondary education in Tanzania. Unpublished paper presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 29 November 2017.
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As all teachers are both models of language use and use language as their prime teaching tool, language training for teaching purposes is needed by both language specialists and teachers of subjects across the curriculum. Assessing language skills at entry into, and graduation from, teacher training college may provide a valuable incentive to increased proficiency. Teachers of language as a subject obviously also need to further develop their understanding of the language (especially through its literature, in all appropriate forms) and, if at all possible, an interest and satisfaction in using it well.

Although the use of the familiar language has been shown to be of crucial importance in the early stages of learning, and less so as learners become independent users of the language of the educational system, use of the familiar/home language remains, even at the highest levels of study, a valuable resource in accessing new concepts and encouraging personal engagement with the learning material. This has particular implications for curriculum design in teacher training where an appreciation of the principled use of multilingualism can be nurtured. Research into innovation in the teacher training curricula in Sub-Saharan African and other postcolonial education systems is needed to create the maximum awareness of good practice and encourage its spread.

There is need for much greater public awareness and debate about the role of language in education and society to benefit from the experience of other countries facing similar issues and to make more appropriate deployment of educational funding. Taylor-Leech and Benson (2017) note that 'despite the essential role of local, regional, national and international languages in human development, there is little reference to language planning in development aid discourse'.

Although, as Simpson (2017) emphasises, 'traditionally there have been quite negative attitudes to translanguaging, so that [the necessary reforms] are often not readily accepted by policymakers as pedagogic solutions to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning', drawing attention to the increasing exploration of the concept – as in Heugh's work (2000) on 'additive' bilingualism in South Africa and the use of translanguaging in tertiary education in Australia (see also Heugh, this volume) – is at least one move towards aligning policy and practice, and creating greater opportunity to achieve the quality of education called for in the Sustainable Development Goals.

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# Part 3

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**Languages, skills and sustainable economic growth  
(SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth)**



# 13. Development from the bottom up: The contribution of local language adult literacy to sustainable development

Ian Cheffy

## Abstract

In the vast field of activity and study that is education in development, one important aspect is frequently overlooked – that of adult education. While considerable attention is given to the education of children in formal settings, on the basis that it provides young people with the essential foundation that they need for productive activity and participation in society in the future, the education of adults is largely ignored, in spite of the significant benefits that it brings, both immediate and long term.

Based on interviews conducted in five African countries with people reflecting on the changes which had come about in their lives as a result of acquiring literacy and numeracy in their own local language through non-formal adult literacy programmes, I argue that adult education, especially in local languages in areas where formal educational levels are low, results in significant benefits not only for those participating in such learning programmes but also for their families and communities. I highlight three of the interviewees in particular to show how their engagement in learning has not simply equipped them with valuable new skills but, furthermore, has also altered their perception of themselves, empowering them to become active agents of change in their contexts. Such positive outcomes are sustainable and contribute to the development of their communities now and in the future.

## Introduction

The participants of the 2017 Language and Development Conference in Dakar were well aware of the pressing need for development in many parts of the world and of the immensity of this challenge, especially as it concerns the African continent. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s latest *Human Development Report* (UNDP, 2019), Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind every other region of the world in terms of global human development. Underpinned by a conception of development which is centred on the vision of all people being able to achieve their full potential, the Human Development Report goes beyond a narrow focus on economic growth to encompass a broad understanding of human well-being in general, expressing this on a number of scales which are combined in the Human Development Index.

The index shows that, on average, people in Sub-Saharan Africa, when compared to the populations of every other region of the world, are least likely to live a long and healthy life, have the least years of schooling, and have the lowest standard of living. Life expectancy at birth is only 61.2 years, over eight years younger than in South Asia, the next lowest-performing region on the index; children can expect to receive only ten years of schooling; and the GNP *per capita* stands at less than \$3,500, only around half of that of South Asia and a quarter of that of the most developed regions of the world. On all these indicators, women are more disadvantaged than men.

Although these figures, of course, hide considerable disparities both between the countries of the region and within countries, they are sufficient to demonstrate that it is in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole that the greatest development needs in the world are to be found. These needs are not only educational, but concern also health, nutrition, security and, in short, quality of life.

Some comfort can be taken from the fact that progress has been made over the last 25 years in this region (UNDP, 2019: p. 307), but a very considerable amount of work remains to be done; this is an enormously challenging task which, arguably, will occupy the global community for generations to come, and which will certainly not be completed by 2030, in spite of the valuable impetus given to the development effort by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contained in the current UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). Development is a never-ending process which takes place through the accumulation of larger and smaller steps on many fronts by countless international, national and local organisations and by the actions of individual people.

In this way, the 12th Language and Development Conference was in itself a contribution to the overall development effort. It provided an opportunity for those of us who are concerned with the language-related aspects of development to come together to share our insights and to stimulate our thinking about how action in the realm of language can best contribute to the development of the world as a whole – and especially, in view of the location of the conference on this occasion, to the development of Africa.

The conference presentations and discussions revealed a shared understanding of the importance of language in development processes, albeit recognising, as Professor Salikoko Mufwene argued in his plenary address, that attending to language issues will not be sufficient in itself to solve all development challenges. Many presentations addressed issues of language policy, and particularly how educational policies and provision could be developed to enable more children to learn effectively in school through the medium of their own language, rather than through an international language, the language of one of the former colonial powers.

This attention to the educational needs of children reflected a long-standing emphasis in international educational discussion on the learning needs of children in primary school, an emphasis which is fully understandable given that primary-level schooling is the foundation on which further progress in formal education depends. It was very clearly exemplified in the eight Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000), in which the main development thrust in education was encapsulated in Goal 2: to 'achieve universal primary education'. Nevertheless, as the much more comprehensive SDGs have now recognised, development is a multifaceted task, and, in the realm of education, primary schooling is only one of many aspects which must be addressed.

In this chapter I argue that adult education is an important and often overlooked component of sustainable development. I go on to describe a research project carried out in five African countries which gathered qualitative evidence from individuals reflecting on how their lives and that of their communities had changed for the better as a result of their learning to read, write and count as adults attending literacy classes. I describe the context in which this research was carried out, and give three examples of individuals whose stories show the impact of gaining literacy as an adult. Finally, I consider some of the implications and future avenues for research and argue both for a reappraisal of the value of qualitative evidence in policymaking and for a recognition that local language literacy for adults is vitally important if the SDGs are to be achieved.

## The role of adult education

In this chapter, I would like to draw attention to an important aspect of education and development which received little attention in the Language and Development Conference: that relating to the non-formal and basic education of adults. Only some four presentations addressed this kind of education against around 30 which, from various angles, discussed the formal education of children and young people – this in a conference which included nearly 100 plenary and parallel presentations. A survey of the post-conference publications of earlier

Language and Development Conferences appears to indicate that this imbalance is by no means new. It seems therefore that here, as in many other educational forums, the educational needs of adults are being largely overlooked and, what is more, there is little recognition of the significant contribution which adult education makes to development processes. This is reflected in resource allocation in that educational budgets prioritise formal education for children and young people, with most governments spending less than four per cent of their annual education budgets on providing learning opportunities for adults (Aitchison, 2017: p. 18).

Adult education is important because development, I argue, takes place 'from the bottom up'. In other words, development happens at the level of individual people when they become able to do what they could not do before, and become better equipped to take actions which, in one way or another, improve their lives. They become 'agents of sustainable development', as described by Professor Paulin Djité during his address to the conference (see also Djité, this volume). This is not to deny the important role of 'top-down' international and national major investments in development projects which benefit whole communities and nations, but rather to emphasise that sustainability in development depends on individual people being able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them, managing their lives for the benefit not only of themselves but also, as I will demonstrate, of those around them. In this sense I very much share the vision of the UNDP and of the authors of the *Human Development Report*, who, following the capabilities approach to development of Amartya Sen (Sen, 1999), understand development in personal and holistic terms (UNDP, 2019) – as being concerned with the life opportunities of people, and as involving all aspects of life.

My own interaction with adults in Africa has convinced me that adult education, albeit overlooked, is extremely significant for the future development of the continent. Adult education, more than formal schooling for young people, makes an immediate impact on development processes in that adults who become literate are able to make an immediate application of their learning to meeting the felt needs that have led them to undertake the learning, whether it be the desire, for instance, to keep financial records, to engage with written information or to support their children's schooling.

In particular, the role of language is central in that it is clear that literacy programmes which enable adults to become literate in their own local language release potential in those who participate in them which would otherwise remain dormant. This is clearly true for people who are not fluent in any language other than their own, and who are not literate in any language before they acquire literacy in their own, but the same applies in the

case of those who have had the opportunity to attend formal schooling and have become literate through the medium of a language other than their home language. Literacy in one's own language opens possibilities which literacy in another language does not provide.

## Uncovering how local language literacy contributes to development

Between 2014 and 2016, my colleague, Joel Trudell, and I carried out research in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya with a view to identifying the changes which people had experienced in their lives and in their communities as a result of acquiring literacy in their local language. Our aim was to give people who had acquired literacy in their own language the opportunity to reflect on the difference which this literacy had made to them over a significant period of time.

On average the 95 people we interviewed had been literate in their own language for around 16 years after attending literacy classes provided by a local organisation. Some of the older people had been literate for a much longer period than this, up to 35 years in one case, whereas others had been literate for a shorter time, only four years. Nevertheless, they were all in a position to look back over a number of years and to take a long-term perspective on the differences in their lives which they felt had resulted from becoming literate in their language. For two-thirds of the interviewees, acquiring literacy in this way was the first time that they were able to make use of written communication as they were previously non-literate, whereas for the remainder, literacy in their own language was an addition to their communicative repertoire since they were already literate in another language, typically through attending formal schooling as children or young people.

Research of this kind, and particularly research which highlights first-hand accounts of the effect of literacy learning, goes some way to meeting the need for more evidence to clarify the impact which adult learning has on the lives of those who participate in it. Research in adult learning and education is complex because of the lack of precise definition of the concept, the multiplicity of forms which it can take and the extreme difficulty of isolating the effects of adult education from other broader influences affecting an individual's life course.

As has been found by the report on adult learning and education in Africa conducted by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (Aitchison, 2017), there is general agreement across the continent on the positive effects of adult education, especially on health, work and community life, but the report makes a strong case for the need for further research to provide substantive evidence of these effects. This chapter addresses that need by taking the case of one specific type of adult learning provision, that of literacy in local languages.

The particular strength of this research is that it took a qualitative approach which we considered to be appropriate as we were concerned to allow the interviewees complete freedom to express their observations and experiences in their own way, rather than being constrained to respond to a predetermined scale or framework of thinking. We did not assess how well the interviewees could read or write, since this was not relevant to our research; our primary interest lay in the felt experiences of the interviewees, which we considered to be independent of their degree of mastery of the skills of literacy.

## Experiences of change due to local language literacy

Most of the interviewees lived in rural areas in the five countries, in places where the local language is in vibrant everyday use. Inevitably, however, in view of the multilingual reality of the continent, they were all to a greater or lesser extent conversant with at least one other language, whether a neighbouring local language, a regional language or an international language.

Until recent times, there was no possibility of written communication in any of these local languages, since they lacked a writing system. But, as a result of linguistic research and language development activities, appropriate orthographies had been developed, followed by the publication of pedagogical and other materials under the auspices of a literacy programme which, even if not ongoing in all of the research sites at the time of our research, had functioned over a number of years.

In this respect, the socio-linguistic context of our research sites was similar to that in many other places in Africa and other parts of the world where the development of oral languages is a relatively recent phenomenon, taking place with the aim of enabling these languages to be used in written form to meet the various communicative, educational and development needs of the community – this in localities where the economy typically revolves around agriculture and where significant development needs have been identified.

Our research therefore took place in contexts which were somewhat similar to those reported by Megan Davies at the 2015 Language and Development Conference in her account of the language development work undertaken among one of the Pashai communities in Afghanistan (Davies, 2017). The particular aim in our research was to identify the long-term impact of such language development, especially as experienced at individual level by people speaking the language and using it in its newly written form.

Our research revealed that none of the interviewees had any doubt that literacy in their own language had made a very significant and wide-ranging difference to them, improving not only their ability to manage their lives but also their functioning within their family and the contribution they were able to make to their community. In other words, they had experienced development in their own lives and, through literacy, were able to contribute to the development process occurring in their wider context. Three examples will illustrate what acquiring literacy meant to them.

### Example 1: Ruth in Kenya

The first example is that of Ruth, a member of a language community located in a rural area in central Kenya where the local economy is primarily based on agriculture. She was the mother of eight children, four of whom were independent at the time of the research, the others still being at school. Like many women in her area, she made a living and provided for her family by buying and selling in her local market.

As a young woman, 20 years before my interview with her, she decided to attend the literacy classes in her language being offered at a local church where participants were not only taught to read and write in their language but also had lessons in numeracy and life skills. She explained that she was motivated to learn by the desire to make up for the incomplete education she had had as a child: although she had started to go to school, she had dropped out before the end of the primary stage.<sup>1</sup> As an adult she wanted to be able to take notes in the meetings she attended, and to be more confident in her business dealings. Previously she had had little concept of the value of money, and so had judged her success in her day's trading simply by the number of bank notes in her purse rather than by calculating their actual value.

Reflecting on the difference that becoming literate in her language had made to her over the years, she highlighted above all how it had enabled her to run her business more profitably. This was of course important in itself, but for her it was a source of pride since it resulted in her being able to pay the significant amounts required as school fees for her children, enabling them to attend secondary school. Through her becoming literate in her own language, her children had benefited from an education which they might not otherwise have received.

She explained that literacy had also enabled her to become a person of some significance in her community.

Having gained confidence with handling money, she had become the treasurer of her church, as well as the leader of the women's group. She had also been given responsibilities in her village as the chair of a women's development group which, among other things, campaigned against female genital cutting, and as the vice-chair of a group promoting irrigation projects. She felt that literacy in her language had clearly made an undeniable contribution to the release of her innate potential as a more capable and responsible adult and parent.

### Example 2: Mariam in Ethiopia

Another telling example is provided by Mariam, a young woman in her early twenties from a community in south-western Ethiopia, an area which is renowned for the terraces constructed by local farmers to facilitate agriculture on the sloping hillsides. Although with experience of fewer years of literacy in her language than Ruth, she was clear that literacy in her language had made a real difference for her. Her parents had seen no value in her attending school since she was a girl, so her future role in their eyes would revolve around marriage and home life. Nevertheless, she was keen to learn, and when she was younger she started sitting in on the adult literacy classes taking place in her village church. Later, having become literate in her language in this way, she was appointed to be a literacy teacher, and she had hopes of becoming a teacher trainer.

As a result of her literacy, she had persuaded her parents to allow her to attend primary school, even though she was a teenager and well above the normal age of enrolment. They had eventually given way to her argument that as an educated person she would be better able to support them in their old age than if she were not educated. In attending school, she became a pioneer in her village and an example to other girls. She pointed to three other girls besides herself who had gained access to schooling because of the literacy they had acquired in their language. Her desire was that a movement of local girls into formal education would begin as a result of her example.

The language of instruction in schools in her home area is Amharic, rather than her own local language, so enrolling in school had opened the way to literacy in the official language of her country, and to proficiency in speaking it. She had also learned some English as part of her studies, thus acquiring ability in Latin script as well as the Ethiopic script used for both her own language and Amharic. As she said, becoming literate

1. The link between primary education and adult education was important for many of the interviewees. They regarded the adult education they had participated in as being of equivalent value to primary education (Trudell & Cheffy, 2017).

in her language had opened her mind to what might lie beyond her life and her immediate experience in her village. It had enabled her to grow through interacting with ideas coming from a wider world and had made possible a future which was likely to be very different from that of most village girls of her age. It was notable that even in her early twenties, she had remained unmarried to that point.

One particularly striking comment which Mariam made about the impact of literacy was that she and other women could now 'speak with their mouths'. She pointed out that until women learned to read and write 'they could only listen'; they were dependent on men telling them what they wanted to know. Literacy, however, enabled women to access information for themselves, to become initiators of written communication and to control that communication without being dependent on others to write down their words for them or to read the words of others to them. One particularly important aspect of this in her local culture, where singing is a common community practice and where there is high regard for composers of songs, was that women who were literate could themselves write down the songs they composed. As with Ruth in Kenya, local language literacy had released underlying potential. Development had taken place.

### Example 3: Flora in Cameroon

The value of local language literacy for women cannot be understated since Mariam was by no means the only person among our interviewees who drew attention to this aspect of their experience in becoming literate in their language. As a third example, from the anglophone area of Cameroon, where formal schooling is longer established than in the rural parts of Ethiopia, and where many girls attend primary school and beyond, women who had acquired literacy to some degree in English through learning it at school nevertheless reported the liberating effect they had experienced when they subsequently became proficient in literacy in their own language.

One such person was Flora, who said, 'If you are not literate, you cannot associate among people. Now I am free, I can stand, I can address people.' While the strength of her assertion may raise questions, her personal experience was that literacy in her language gave her a status in her community and a confidence in expressing herself which she would not otherwise have felt. Although she had gained this confidence as a result of literacy, it affected her ability to communicate orally, enabling her to make her views known through speaking as well as through writing. In her case, and that of other

women among our interviewees, development took the form of giving them voice, making it possible for them to be better respected in their community and to make their opinions known, thus making community decision-making processes stronger through their involvement and contribution.

These examples are but three drawn from our larger body of data in which the interviewees all made clear how becoming literate in their language had been instrumental in changing the course of their life for the better. To these three could be added Bertrand from the Gourmanchéma area of Burkina Faso, for whom becoming literate in his language resulted in the growth of his tailoring business; or Grace in Ghana: as a traditional birth attendant, literacy in her language enabled her to carry out her responsibilities more effectively by keeping records of the women she was supporting. The same skills contributed to her success as a farmer as she could monitor the growth of her pigs and goats based on the records she kept of their birth.

For many of the interviewees, the skills of reading and writing were of practical and direct use, enabling them to read and learn from written texts, and to communicate their thoughts and desires to others in writing. But in addition, literacy had an intangible but no less important outcome in that it changed their perception of themselves and their standing in the eyes of their family and community. Literacy therefore made a major contribution to them fulfilling their potential. These changes can readily be seen as sustainable and as development 'from the bottom up'.

### Looking ahead

Our research makes a convincing case for the contribution of local language literacy to sustainable development, based as it is on the testimony of people for whom literacy of this kind has led to changes in their life situation which they regard as positive and important. It complements other studies of the impact of local language development in marginalised communities (Burchfield et al., 2002; Trudell, 2009; Laviña-Gumba, 2015) through its focus on individual experience and its long-term retrospective view as the interviewees looked back on their lives over many years.

However, it does not answer every question and it is not sufficient in itself to effect a major change in educational policies and resource allocation. For this, a greater body of this kind of data is needed, and in more fine-grained detail, demonstrating the linkages and chains of causality between the acquisition of literacy in the local language and, for instance, economic or empowerment outcomes.

In addition, more evidence needs to be collected on the ramifications of local language literacy – in other words, on the way in which the acquisition of literacy by an individual impacts the lives of those around them. The example of Ruth in Kenya showed how her acquisition of literacy resulted in an improved educational trajectory for her children, and also made it possible for her to contribute her personal skills and abilities for the benefit of different groups in her community. The literacy acquired by Mariam and others mentioned above had similarly benefited people around them. This kind of ripple effect in literacy deserves more recognition than it currently receives, not least because it would contribute to an analysis of the value of financial investment in adult education, demonstrating that the outcomes of adult literacy acquisition are by no means confined to the individual learners alone.

Although seen in some policymaking quarters as less persuasive than quantitative research, qualitative research has an important contribution to make in this endeavour especially as it provides a rich source of data, illuminating the multiple ways in which people and their communities experience development through the acquisition of literacy. Qualitative research complements studies which focus on counting or estimating the numbers of people with literacy skills or assessing their degree of competence, which, although helpful to a degree, do not uncover the impact of literacy as it is experienced by people in their lives, nor allow research subjects to express themselves in an unconstrained way about the issues that matter to them. Qualitative research provides compelling evidence of the positive effects of adult literacy and education.

It is to be hoped that by 2030 significant progress will have been made towards the achievement of the SDGs, in spite of the enormity of the task ahead. Local language literacy for adults has a crucial part to play in this process, and as further research is conducted its contribution will become all the more evident.

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## 14. Health, the economy and language in Africa: A case study

*Paulin G Djité*

### Abstract

Although growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have decelerated to 1.5 per cent in 2016, as commodity exporters adjusted to lower commodity prices, Africa's growth record over the past two decades has been impressive. However, progress remains unequal, inequitable and non-inclusive. Institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) are calling for 'inclusive economic growth' and the need to 'build resilience through equity and inclusion'. Indeed, two of the AfDB's five core operational priorities, the 'High 5s for transforming Africa', are 'Integrate Africa' and 'Improve the living conditions of Africans' (AfDB, 2015).

What is the missing link? Why is it that the majority of Africans are not benefiting from this economic growth? How can Sub-Saharan Africa be 'integrated' and 'the living conditions' of its people effectively 'improved'?

This chapter looks at how bridges can be built between economic growth, language and sustainable development to take everyone along for the ride. It examines the socio-economic impacts of the Ebola virus epidemic (EVE) in West Africa to identify African economies' vulnerabilities and the important role of language and communication. Much like the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in the late 1980s, it argues that 'there is no development without communication' (Balit, 1988), and that one of the root causes of Africa's fragilities and inability to achieve the goal of inclusive growth lies in the marginalisation of the majority of the people, due to the absence of efficient and effective language policy and planning.

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**Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.**

**Attributed to Einstein**

### Introduction

This chapter comes under Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8): 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all' (United Nations, 2015), with a special focus on the sub-theme of 'language, skills and sustainable growth'. As a result, it is two-pronged.

First, it argues that Africa's fragilities and vulnerabilities are complex, multifaceted and lie in the very pillars of education, health, the economy and governance, which undergird sustainable growth. Using the example of the Ebola virus epidemic (EVE) that gripped West Africa from December 2013 to May 2014, it aims to show how some of these pillars – in this instance health, language and the economy – are entwined, and can boost or constrain one another. It also looks at the fundamental role of language and communication as an enabler in developing the human resource capacities that form the foundation of the value chain<sup>1</sup> of sustainable development.

Second, it argues that a change of mindset and paradigm is needed when it comes to language policy and language planning research and action in Africa; for it serves no reasonable purpose for researchers interested in language issues to gather together and preach to the converted. What is needed is moving beyond mere advocacy and making a strong case for the relevance of language – not just in the field of education, but also in the critical areas of health, the courts of law, governance and the economy. The results of such systematic empirical research into language use, language choice, language identity and the dominant language(s) of everyday life will help decision makers better understand the critical role of language in development projects, as well as gaps in the continent's capacity to develop (Djité, 2011a, 2009). Evidence-based data is critical for decision making, and governments need reliable macro- and micro-data to guide policy.

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**When the best leader's work is done, the people will say, 'We have done it ourselves.'**

**Lao Tzu**

1. The value chain, a business management concept first introduced by Professor Michael Porter (1985), is the full set of activities that an organisation carries out to take a product or service from conception to reality.

Anyone who has been involved in research on the African continent knows that obtaining reliable data requires independent empirical study. Data from governments, apart from gross domestic product (GDP) data, is often nonexistent, 'missing' or simply and purposefully deceptive. Everything in this realm is seen as top secret, and the researcher is, at best, suspected of being a do-gooder. As Jerven (2013) puts it, even GDP figures are so unsatisfactory that they are almost useless without an understanding of the economic and statistical histories of individual countries. Relying on such figures distorts the perception of the reality and leads to the wrong policy decisions. It is urgent for researchers interested in language issues to refocus their energies and engage in empirical studies to collect their own data on the nexus between language and the key areas of sustainable growth, in order to understand better the best ways to address the continent's fragilities and vulnerabilities.

This chapter is an attempt at carrying out such an exercise. It looks at how entwined health and the economy are, and how both are in turn closely linked to the issue of language as an enabler and a driver of efficacy and efficiency.

I will first provide some background by examining facts and figures from the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa to illustrate some of these issues, and by looking in more detail at some of the established regional sustainable development discourse as exemplified by the African Development Bank's (AfDB) 'High 5s'.

## The economy: Some facts and figures

Although growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have decelerated to 1.5 per cent in 2016, as commodity exporters adjusted to lower commodity prices, Africa's growth record over the past two decades has been impressive. Despite downside risks arising from the spread of the Ebola epidemic (in West Africa), violent insurgencies and volatile global financial conditions more generally, growth in Ethiopia was forecast to expand by 8.3 per cent in 2017, in Tanzania by 7.2 per cent, in Côte d'Ivoire by 6.8 per cent and in Senegal by 6.7 per cent, mostly driven by public investments, while overall growth in the region was forecast to pick up to 2.6 per cent in 2017 and 3.2 per cent in 2018 (World Bank Group, 2017). By 2019, 18 African countries (one-third of the continent) had achieved a medium to high level of human development (UNDP, 2019).

There are two challenges to this positive outlook.

First, while many of the continent's economies appear to be improving fast, it is important to bear in mind that out of the 36 heavily indebted poor countries (HICPs), 31 are in Sub-Saharan Africa (IMF, 2019). These economies, which benefited from debt forgiveness, are characterised by unsustainable public debt, endless borrowing, exceptionally high current account deficits and excessive reliance on commodities, with eight oil exporters, including Angola and Nigeria, accounting for 50 per cent of regional GDP (see IMF, 2015 and Stevis, 2015).

Second, despite decades of continued economic growth, progress remains unequal, inequitable and non-inclusive. The overwhelming evidence points to 'impoverishing' growth, with some 544 million Africans, or 54 per cent of the population of 46 African countries, still trapped in extreme poverty (AfDB, OECD & UNDP, 2017). In addition, between one in four and one in five people in the region may have suffered from chronic food deprivation in 2017 (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO, 2018: p. 3). This situation echoes an Ivorian witty remark: 'One cannot eat growth.' It has led institutions such as Oxfam to issue a challenge to African leaders 'to champion new economic models' and 'build a new, more "human economy"' to tackle inequality and poverty (Oxfam, 2017: pp. 1–2), and the AfDB to call for 'inclusive economic growth' and the need to 'build resilience through equity and *inclusion*'.

## The African Development Bank's development priorities: The High 5s

A closer look at the AfDB's development priorities for Africa, known as the High 5s for transforming Africa (AfDB, 2015), and the findings they are premised on, provides some insights into the continent's real economic situation. The High 5s are described in Table 1 below, and a discussion of each of the High 5s follows.

**Table 1:** AfDB High 5s descriptions and goals

High 5s (titles)	Description	Goals
<b>Light up and power Africa</b>	Universal access to electricity	+162GW electricity generated +130 million on-grid connections +75 million off-grid connections
<b>Feed Africa</b>	Agricultural transformation	300 million people adequately fed +100 million people lifted out of poverty +190 million hectares with restored productivity
<b>Industrialise Africa</b>	Economic diversification	Industrial contribution to GDP increased by 130% 35 industry clusters supported 30 public–private partnerships (PPPs) developed and strengthened
<b>Integrate Africa</b>	Regional markets	Building regional infrastructure Boosting intra-African trade and investment Facilitating movement of people across borders
<b>Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa</b>	Access to social and economic opportunities	Creating 25 million jobs Building critical skills Improving access to water and sanitation Strengthening health systems

Source: AfDB. See <https://www.afdb.org/en/high5s>

### Why is it urgent to light up and power Africa?

Because the largest deficit in Africa is in the energy sector, with over 645 million Africans not having access to electricity, especially in low-income countries, where electricity coverage can be as low as 23 per cent in rural areas; and because demand for energy is expected to grow by 93 per cent in the next few years, with an over-reliance on environmentally damaging electricity production such as coal-fired power plants (AfDB, 2015).

### Why is it urgent to feed Africa?

Because agriculture contributes 15 per cent of the continent's GDP and provides 50 per cent of the labour force; because it is the main source of income for Africa's rural population; and because more than 70 per cent of Africans depend on it for their livelihoods (AfDB, OECD & UNDP, 2017).

However, the full potential of this sector has yet to be unlocked, especially with changing trends in consumption habits driven by demographic factors, such as population growth and urbanisation, which are leading to rapidly rising food imports (currently US\$35 billion annually and expected to grow to well over US\$110 billion by 2025).

Because, while Africa has 60 per cent of the arable land in the world, it accounts for only ten per cent of global food output and can hardly feed itself (AfDB, OECD & UNDP, 2017). At the time of writing:

- of the Malagasy population, 77.6 per cent live under the poverty line of \$1.90 per day (World Bank Group, 2019, citing last official statistics in 2012)
- some three million people are in need of immediate food aid in the eight countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU, or UEMOA in French<sup>2</sup>) space<sup>3</sup>
- the prevalence of global acute malnutrition (a measure of acute malnutrition in refugee children aged between six months and five years old<sup>4</sup>) remains critical in the north of Mali and southeast of Niger
- according to the World Food Programme, 1.5 million people or 12 per cent of the total population of Niger were affected by food insecurity in 2017 and 1.9 million people are expected to be food insecure in 2020 (WFP, 2020)
- the number of Kenyans in need of emergency food aid in March 2017 had doubled within three months to reach 2.7 million people (IFRC, 2017), while inflation reached nine per cent in February 2017, the highest level of inflation the country had experienced for five years. The Kenyan humanitarian crisis has affected several other countries in the region, including Somalia, which is experiencing its third famine in less than 30 years; the present drought has been ongoing for five years from 2015 to 2020 (UN OCHA, 2020)
- in South Sudan, 57 per cent of the population were projected to face 'acute food security or worse' in mid-2019 (IPC, 2019), not because of drought but because of armed conflict ongoing since December 2013.

2. The WAEMU countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. They share the same currency of the French African colonies, the CFA franc, now called the African Financial Community franc, pegged to the euro.  
 3. According to a communiqué read on Niger television on 9 June 2017 on behalf of the ministers of agriculture of the WAEMU.  
 4. See <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/32604/acute-malnutrition-threshold>  
 5. The AfDB plans to launch an industrialisation strategy for Africa, with the goal of increasing the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the continent's GDP from \$751 billion to \$1.72 trillion within the next decade.

## Why is it urgent to industrialise Africa?

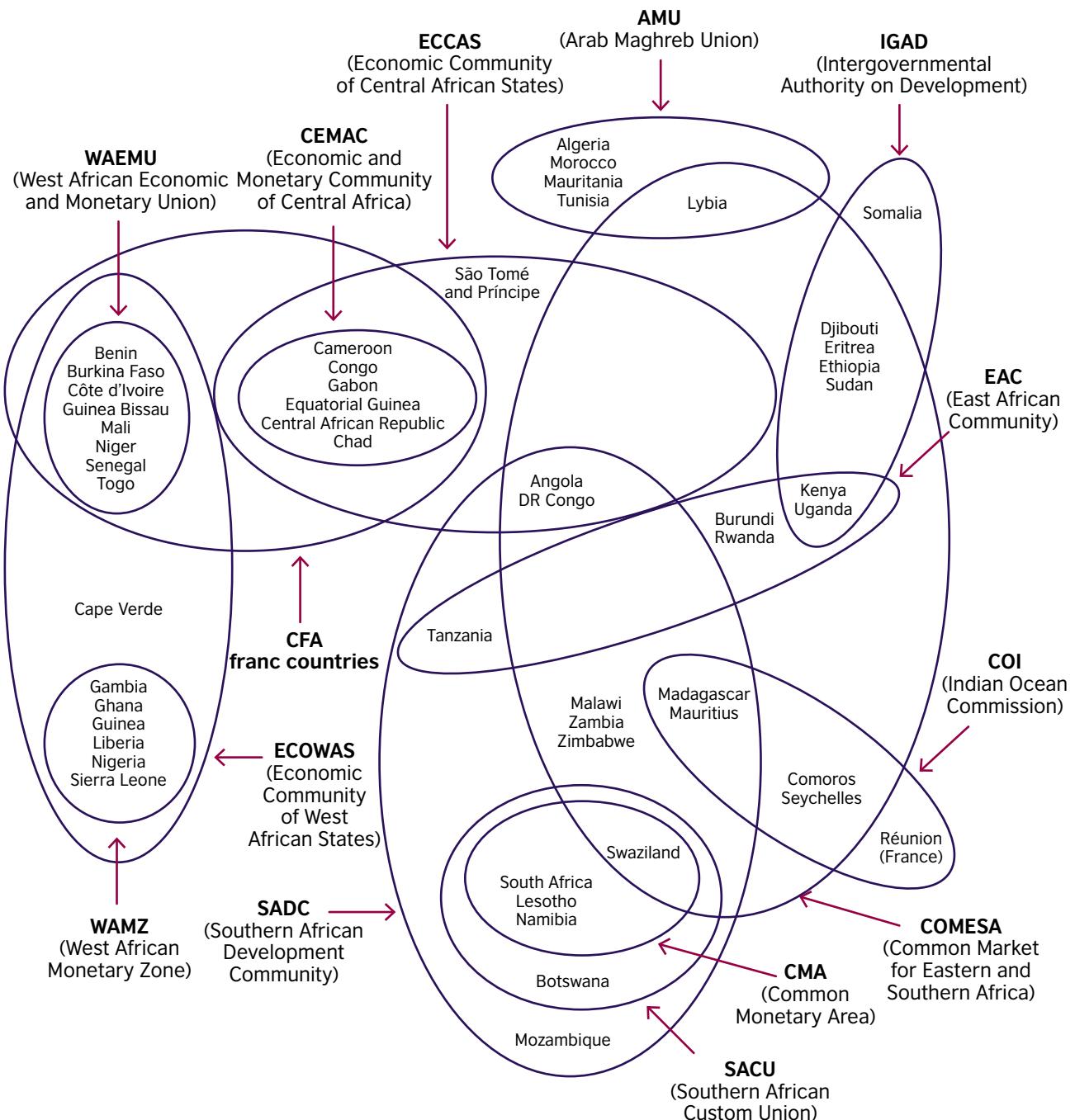
Because the lack of industrialisation is holding back Africa's economies more than five decades after independence, and because the contribution of Africa's manufacturing sector to the continent's GDP declined from 12 per cent in 1980 to 11 per cent in 2013, and has remained stagnant ever since (UNECA, 2013).<sup>5</sup>

The huge infrastructure deficit is a major bottleneck for growth (AfDB, 2014): even though the existing roads and railways carry about 80 per cent of the goods and 90 per cent of the passengers, almost 50 per cent of roads are not paved, and less than half of Africa's rural people have access to all-weather roads. The 52,000-mile rail network is in dire need of maintenance.

Furthermore, there is little connectivity between the existing 64 ports on the continent, and between these ports and the hinterland, be it by road or by air. Air travel between countries of the same sub-region can still take longer than air travel from Africa to Europe or the United States. The AfDB, OECD and UNDP (2017) estimate that Sub-Saharan Africa needs to invest more than US\$93 billion annually over the next decade to bridge its infrastructure gap. Over 60 per cent of this sum is needed for brand new infrastructure, and approximately 30 per cent for the maintenance of existing but decaying infrastructure.

## Why is it urgent to integrate Africa?

Because, 50 years after the first initiatives, African integration remains largely a work in progress, despite the existence of nearly 160 African regional or continental organisations, not to mention all the small non-governmental organisations, many with overlapping competences; and no less than 14 regional blocks allowing the free movement of persons, goods and services across member countries, with some states being members of several of these organisations at once – as depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Summary of regional integration in 2017**Adapted from Jacquemot (2017).<sup>6</sup>

6. Jacquemot, P. La problématique de l'intégration régionale en Afrique. Unpublished paper presented at the 4th International Conference of the Africa Initiative Group, Yamoussoukro, 29 September – 1 October 2017.

Many of these organisations are recognised by the African Union (see Table 2). The continent has five free trade zones:

- Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Many of these have produced blueprints for establishing their own monetary unions. Six of the ECOWAS countries (Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) were working towards establishing a common currency zone by 2015 called the West African Monetary

Zone (WAMZ), although the project is not yet implemented. This was, in turn, to be merged with the existing WAEMU, whose eight members currently use the CFA franc.

Meanwhile, in 2013, the leaders of the five member countries of the East African Community signed a protocol laying down the groundwork for a monetary union within ten years. In the SADC, the plan was to establish a monetary union by 2016 and to have a single currency by 2018. The members of the COMESA were also working towards establishing a monetary union with a common currency by 2018. These regional initiatives were expected to result in the establishment of an African economic and monetary union as envisaged in the Abuja Treaty of 1991, but none of these monetary unions have yet been implemented.

**Table 2:** Main regional organisations recognised by the African Union

Main economic communities	Member countries	Population and regional GDP in 2015
COMESA: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa	Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda, DRC, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, The Union of the Comoros, Zambia, Zimbabwe	469 million people GDP: US\$588 billion
EAC: East African Community	Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania	149 million people GDP: US\$98 billion
ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States	Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, CAR, DRC, São Tome and Principe, Chad	142 million people GDP: US\$224 billion
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape-Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo	320 million people GDP: US\$396 billion
SADC: Southern African Development Community	South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mauritius, DRC, Seychelles, Zambia, Zimbabwe	287 million people GDP: US\$648 billion
IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development	Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan	236 million people GDP: US\$175 billion

Source: Jacquemot (2017).<sup>7</sup>

7. *Ibid.*

Therefore, despite efforts to promote regional integration on the continent of Africa, not much progress has been made. This is particularly the case for increasing regional trade. Formal intraregional trade, mostly led by regional powers (South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire), stands at 15 per cent, compared with 70 per cent in the European Union and 50 per cent in Asia, and is concentrated around a limited number of products (hydrocarbons, cotton, cattle, cereals) and countries. Cross-border trade is also very expensive, with an average cost double that of OECD countries and countries in Southeast Asia.

Beyond the free movement of goods and services, Africa needs to focus on the unimpeded movement of people and investment: even in free trade zones, Africans often need a visa to travel to another African country. Only 13 countries offer free cross-border access. Indeed, it is often observed that North Americans travel much more easily in Africa than Africans themselves. The obstacles are not always legal, are numerous, and cost time and money (US\$450 to go through ten check points from Koutiala in Mali to Dakar in Senegal; and 36 hours at the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa). An example within the WAEMU is broken down in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Abnormal practices affecting free movement within WAEMU (2017)

Road section	Distance (miles)	Number of legal and illegal check points	Additional delays (minutes)	Illegal levies in CFA franc
Abidjan-Bamako	729	38	150	12,700
Abidjan-Ouagadougou	785	31	130	17,700
Bamako-Dakar via Diboli	859	28	299	22,300
Cotonou-Niamey	590	10	170	9,000
Dakar-Bissau	654	38	390	-
Lomé-Ouagadougou	653	27	102	13,000
Ouagadougou-Bamako via Heremakono	580	14	95	22,400
Ouagadougou-Bamako via Koury	643	21	120	23,300
Tema-Ouagadougou	657	21	162	19,500

Source: Jacquemot (2017).<sup>8</sup>

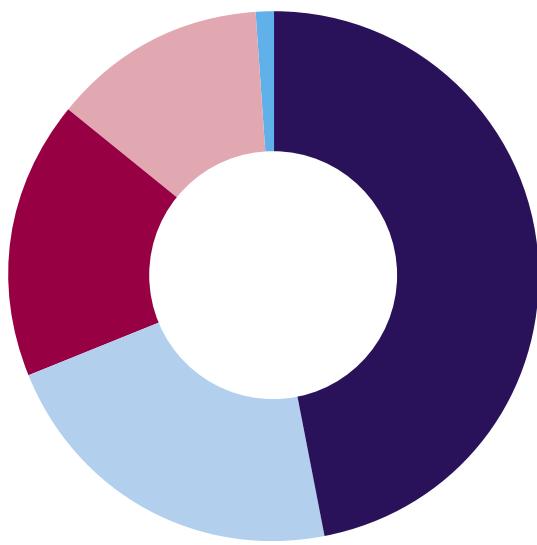
8. *Ibid.*

## Why is it urgent to improve the quality of life for the people of Africa?

Because the continent's economic growth has not been rapid and inclusive enough to create enough jobs and improve the quality of life for Africans, and because only 61 per cent of African citizens have access to improved water sources and only 30 per cent have access to improved sanitation (i.e. hygienic separation of human excreta from human contact) (UNDESA, 2014).

To address the issues described above, the AfDB has committed to finance the High 5s to the tune of US\$5.536 billion over a three-year period (2017–19), allocated as follows.

**Figure 2:** Summary of funding for the AfDB High 5s (2017–19)



■	Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa US\$2.590 billion: 47%
■	Integrate Africa US\$1.221 billion: 22%
■	Feed Africa US\$961 million: 17%
■	Light up and power Africa US\$731 million 13%
■	Industrialise Africa US\$33 million: 1%

Source: AfDB (2017).

9. The UNDP defines the term 'demographic dividend' as the potential economic growth that can result from the evolution of the age pyramid, especially when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64 years old) is greater than the rest of the population (below 14 years old and over 65 years old).
10. Answering a question from the Oxford Business Group in June 2017 on the vulnerability of African markets to global shocks, Akinwumi Adesina, the President of the AfDB, pointed out that several commodity exporters (including South Africa, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and oil exporters such as Nigeria, Algeria, Angola, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo) have been severely hit by the dip in commodity prices and the slowdown in China's economy, leading to significant revenue shortfalls in these countries. Adesina cited figures that Africa supplies 75 per cent of global cocoa production (UNCTAD, 2015), but reaps only two per cent of the profits from the US\$100 billion annual market for chocolate. Processing cocoa into chocolate would significantly increase revenues for cocoa exporters. The same logic applies to oil, iron ore, platinum and manganese, among other commodities.

A similar approach can be identified in academic analyses of the socio-economic challenges facing the continent. In *Making Africa work* (2017), Mills et al. identify population growth (two billion by 2045, at times perceived as a 'demographic dividend'<sup>9</sup>), urbanisation and ICT as the three big, inter-related challenges Sub-Saharan Africa faces over the next generation. They suggest five priorities to ensure growth beyond commodities and create jobs across the continent: agriculture, mining, the processing industry, services and technology.<sup>10</sup>

While both the AfDB's analysis and Mill et al. point to the magnitude of the task, it should be noted that neither mentions the role of language. Why? How are the majority of Africans going to find work in Africa or 'make Africa work'? Why is it that the majority of Africans are not benefiting from the economic growth? How can Africa be 'integrated' and 'the living conditions' of its people be effectively 'improved'? Who and where are the actors likely to carry out this integration and improvement of the living conditions?

These are some of the questions which are brought to the fore by the series of crises that continue to expose the continent's fragilities and vulnerabilities. These questions point to the urgent need of bringing the majority of the people under the same tent and taking them along for the ride.

One such crisis was the EVE that hit three countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) in West Africa, from December 2013 to May 2014. It was a crisis that raises the question of why language is important to healthcare, and why health is important to the economy and to sustainable development at large.

## The Ebola virus epidemic: A tragedy

The EVE was not only the most important and most complex epidemic on record in West Africa; it brought to the fore several aspects of the continent's vulnerabilities, namely health, the economy, language and communication.

Originating in the forest region of Guinea in December 2013, in and around the towns of Guéckédou, Macenta and Kissidougou, and later in the capital Conakry, the outbreak quickly spread to Liberia (first confirmed laboratory case on 13 March 2014) and then to Sierra Leone in the three main towns along the eastern border region near Kailahun (May 2014). By the end of 2014, 17,111 cases were identified (10,708 laboratory confirmed) across the three countries, resulting in 6,055 deaths (WHO, 2014a). An additional eight cases, including six deaths, were also reported in Mali, with other cases reported in Nigeria and Senegal. A total of 622 healthcare workers were infected (605 of these in the three most affected countries), with nearly three out of five dying (UNECA, 2015: p. 16).

Mortality rates varied per country: 61 per cent (1,327 out of 2,164) in Guinea; 41 per cent (3,145 out of 7,635) in Liberia; and 22 per cent (1,583 out of 7,312) in Sierra Leone: an average mortality rate of 35 per cent across the three countries (World Bank, 2014a, 2014b; WHO, 2014a; MSF, 2014; Government of Sierra Leone, 2014b). This is summarised in Table 4 below, which gives data from December 2014.

These are not just figures: these numbers include women, children and whole families that were completely decimated by the epidemic in a matter of weeks.

The situation was made worse by political fragility and weakened institutional capacity; a recent history marked by civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone; the already poor health situation in all three countries; and also, in part, because the international response to the outbreak was not activated until March of the following year – i.e. nearly four months after the outbreak started. The EVE also seriously affected national responses to other diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and cholera (MSF, 2014; WHO, 2014a; World Bank, 2014a, 2014e; Government of Sierra Leone, 2014b).

### **Economic impacts: Fall in economic growth rates and GDP growth**

Although their prospects are largely determined by other factors not related to the EVE, the economies of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone were considerably weakened, and growth severely eroded, because of the combined effects of the disease and the prevalent structural problems (i.e. declining prices of international commodities, poor education and healthcare systems, and lack of good governance). The economic impacts included falling growth, decline in government revenue, little or no investments in infrastructure and social services, rising prices, and falls in business and personal incomes (UNECA, 2015: p. xiii).

Headline statistics are discussed below and summarised in Table 5.

The effect on the countries' growth rates was rapid. In 2014 Guinea's annual growth rate fell from 3.9 per cent in 2012 to 1.1 per cent in 2014, translating into a real GDP loss from US\$230 million to US\$300 million; Liberia's annual growth rate fell from 8.2 per cent in 2012 to 0.7 per cent in 2014, translating into a real GDP loss from US\$188 million to US\$245 million; and Sierra Leone's annual growth rate fell from 15.2 per cent in 2012 and 20.7 per cent in 2013 to 4.6 per cent in 2014, translating into a real GDP loss of US\$219 million (Trading Economics, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Gouvernement de la Guinée, 2014; Government of Liberia, 2014; Government of Sierra Leone, 2014a).

During the course of 2014, the IMF and World Bank were forced to revise down their growth forecasts for the three countries repeatedly. In August 2014, the IMF revised down Guinea's GDP growth from 4.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent for 2014 (IMF, 2014a, 2014b). By October that year, the epidemic led to a further downward revision in the World Bank's 2014 GDP forecast, from 4.5 per cent to 2.4 per cent, with two per cent forecast for 2015 (World Bank, 2014a, 2014b). By December, the World Bank cut its 2014 growth projection even further, to 0.5 per cent (World Bank, 2014d; UNECA, 2015: p. 11).

In the case of Liberia, the IMF had already forecast a slowdown, from 8.75 per cent (in 2013) to six per cent (in 2014), before the outbreak. However, as the epidemic curtailed activity in mining, agriculture and services in the second half of the year, the IMF subsequently revised down its 2014 real GDP growth forecast to 2.5 per cent (IMF, 2014a; UNECA, 2014c). In October 2014, the World Bank revised down its 2014 GDP growth forecast from 5.9 per cent before the epidemic to 2.5 per cent (World Bank, 2014b, 2014c), and further down to 2.2 per cent in December 2014 (Hettinger, 2014; UNECA, 2014c: p. 12; World Bank, 2014e).

In the case of Sierra Leone, the World Bank revised down its 2014 GDP growth forecast from 11.3 per cent before the epidemic to 8.9 per cent in October 2014 (World Bank, 2014b) and further to four per cent in December 2014 (World Bank, 2014c).

**Table 4:** EVE cases, deaths and mortality rates in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (December 2014)

Countries affected	Cases identified	Number of deaths	Mortality rate
Guinea	2,164	1,327	61%
Liberia	7,635	3,145	41%
Sierra Leone	7,312	1,583	22%
Total	17,111	6,055	35.38%

Sources: World Bank (2014a, 2014b); WHO (2014a); MSF (2014); Government of Sierra Leone (2014b).

**Table 5:** Loss in GDP growth and budget deficit in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone

Countries affected	Annual average fall in economic growth rate (2012 rate to 2014 rate)	Loss in GDP growth in 2014 (compared to 2012)	Estimated real GDP loss in 2014 (US\$)	Budget deficit in 2015
Guinea	3.9% to -0.30%	-4.20%	\$230 – \$300 million	9.4%
Liberia	8.2% to 0.7%	-7.5%	\$188 – \$245 million	8.5%
Sierra Leone	15.2% to 4.6%	-10.6%	\$219 million	4.8%

Sources: Gouvernement de la Guinée (2014); Government of Liberia (2014); Government of Sierra Leone (2014a); IMF (2015); Trading Economics (2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

### Economic impacts: Falling government revenues

Guinea's revenue shortfall owing to the EVE was estimated in August 2014 at about \$27 million, or 0.4 per cent of GDP (IMF, 2014a). Estimates for Liberia indicated that government revenues for 2014 would be \$106.1 million lower than initially projected (Government of Liberia, 2014), equivalent to some five per cent of GDP. Sierra Leone's revenue shortfall was estimated at about \$46 million for 2014, and \$91 million for 2015, equivalent to one per cent and 1.6 per cent of non-iron ore GDP (IMF, 2014b; National Revenue Authority of Sierra Leone, 2014).

The Liberia Revenue Administration projected revenues for 2014 to decline by 19 per cent (Government of Liberia, 2014; UNECA, 2014c: p. 22) and the National Revenue Authority of Sierra Leone (2014) reported a 15 per cent shortfall in tax collection against the targets set for July and August 2014.

In 2015, budget deficits for all three countries were estimated at 9.4 per cent of GDP for Guinea, 8.5 per cent for Liberia and 4.8 per cent for Sierra Leone (IMF, 2015).

### Socio-economic impacts: Education and employment

Educational services were curtailed in all three countries, although the implications for educational outcomes are still unclear. Productivity was severely affected by the lower education of those who did not return to school (UNECA, 2015).

Unemployment and commercial closures rose. Many businesses shut down, and those which stayed open cut staff or reduced working hours. However, the largest proportion of the population exposed consisted of rural families, who depended on subsistence farming. Such people seldom have many resources in stock to fall back on and have seen most of their savings eroded. And, as markets closed for weeks and economic activity contracted, producers of perishable goods could not sell their produce, affecting household security (socio-economic and food security, as illustrated in the next section on social impacts), particularly in border areas.

## Social impacts

The social impacts were equally devastating, as the EVE caused a rise in morbidity and mortality from diseases not directly related to the epidemic itself, given the following combined effects on regular healthcare provision (BBC, 2014; Government of Sierra Leone, 2014b; MSF, 2014; Nichols & Harding Giahue, 2014; UNECA, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d; FAO, 2014a, 2014b; UNDP, 2014a).

- A great number of children were orphaned, families and communities were devastated, essential services such as education and health were compromised, means of subsistence were disrupted, and sources of income were lost.
- Fewer people sought formal medical attention, because of the fear and/or the stigma of being exposed to Ebola, thereby increasing the incidence of other diseases, including malaria, dengue fever and yellow fever, and increasing the risks linked to fewer vaccinations and less antenatal and child healthcare, all of which raised maternal and infant mortality rates.
- A significant share of the deaths reported were among medical personnel and specialised doctors, hampering the countries' capacity to recover from the epidemic once it abated. Mortality rates among healthcare workers were 1.45 per cent in Guinea, 8.07 per cent in Liberia and 6.85 per cent in Sierra Leone. As a result, stigma towards healthcare workers grew among the population. Doctors and nurses were seen as potential vectors of infection, making it hard for them and their families to lead a normal life (UNDP, 2014b; Evans, Goldstein & Popova, 2015).

At an AfDB Workshop for the Validation of the Database for the Management of West African Experts for the Rapid Response to Epidemics in May 2017, a medical doctor who participated in the emergency rescue effort during the EVE outbreak said:

*Do not believe anyone who tells you that the Ebola virus disease outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone was an epidemic. It was far more than that; it was a tragedy.<sup>11</sup>*

## Discussion

The EVE crisis shows the effect of health on economic growth. The epidemic was indeed a tragedy of great proportion that laid bare the lack of preparedness of the healthcare system of the three countries concerned, with a huge human toll and significant economic and social impacts. There are also other tragedies, perhaps of lesser proportion, but significant tragedies nonetheless, happening almost every day on the continent. If the EVE can be seen as an extreme example of structural weakness and lack of preparedness, it is unfortunately not an isolated case in Africa, as there are many other tragedies unfolding today. As a recent example, the World Health Organization noted that there are more than 100 health emergencies in the African region annually (WHO, 2018).

The lack of preparedness in ensuring healthcare provision for the general population has been displayed again and again. This explains the 'medical tourism' of the African elite and political leaders, who travel overseas for routine health checks and treatments, at great expense, while leaving behind poorly funded health services and state-run hospitals and clinics that often run out of basic medicines.<sup>12</sup> According to the World Health Organization, in 2012 African countries spent an average of US\$171 per capita on health, compared with a worldwide average of US\$1,112 (WHO, 2014b).

If the socio-economic consequences of these tragedies are obvious, what has language got to do with the EVE and the wider health and socio-economic landscape?

## What has language got to do with it?

The former executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Carlos Lopes, concluded the 2015 report of his institution into the EVE with these words:

*If there is one lesson I would like to underline, it is this – the need to communicate properly and so avoid the destructive effects of any possible 'Ebola panic disease'.*

**UNECA (2015: p. ix), my emphasis**

Lopes was perhaps the only figure to have identified one of the crucial missing links in the huge international effort to stem the spread of the epidemic.

11. A 'tragedy' compounded by recent revelations of the misappropriation of €5 million in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, with the complicity of Red Cross employees in these countries, through overbilling, embezzlement of bonuses, clearance of goods and banking fraud (RFI, 2017).
12. Recent cases in point are those of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, who suffered a stroke in 2013 and has been in France for periodic health checks ever since; President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, undergoing his health checks in Spain; President Patrice Talon of Benin, who had two surgical operations (prostate and digestive system) in France in June 2017; President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, who has undergone medical treatment in the United Kingdom repeatedly since 2016; and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, who before his death travelled to Singapore for treatment.

Indeed, when international aid finally arrived, some four months after the onset of the epidemic, major challenges were not limited to the lack of infrastructure, funds, expert medical teams and public health rapid response teams but also, significantly, included the language and communication barrier. Language and communication were the reasons why 220 Cuban doctors sent to Guinea at the height of the EVE could not be deployed immediately, because they only spoke Cuban Spanish and had no interpreters available to facilitate communication between them and the patient population, who did not speak Cuban Spanish.

Lack of language and cultural awareness and sensitivity was also found to be the cause of the killing, in September 2014, of eight officials and journalists in the village of Womey in Guinea – part of a delegation sent there to warn of the EVE's dangers – whose bodies were dismembered and dumped in a septic tank. In Koyama, another village in Guinea, the highest-ranking district official was held hostage for hours under a hail of stones. In many other places, the Red Cross and other international teams could not even enter villages to retrieve the sick or dead bodies, in part because medical teams insisted on fumigating villages on days when traditional ceremonies were being held, without any prior communication.

Would language and communication have made a difference? Would any lives have been saved, had the rapid response teams been aware – or been made aware – of the need to engage the patient population in an inclusive way through language and communication? At the very least, it can be said that many of the major stumbling blocks to sustainable development on the continent are man-made. More generally, evidence on the ground – the above being extreme examples – shows that language and communication are fundamental variables for facilitating co-operation, and make a significant contribution to capacity development.

### **Human resources are the key to inclusive and sustainable development**

Decision makers, politicians, economists and researchers alike cannot continue to plod along pretending not to be aware of this major vulnerability: making significant headway in integrating Africa and improving the living conditions of Africans requires capacity development; however, capacity development is not just about building infrastructure – once again, one cannot eat infrastructure – it is also about human resources, because it is human resources that build, maintain and improve the infrastructure. These human resources are the crucial link in the sustainable development value chain. They

need to be fully empowered and given voice, to help identify gaps in the critical areas of education, health, the economy and governance, with a view to effecting the changes required for progress.

There is widespread unwillingness to examine the issue of language in most parts of the continent, for a host of old and mythical reasons, most of which do not stand up to scrutiny. Meanwhile, the rest of the world is moving ahead in the search for efficiency and progress through language. Most Asian countries, whose economies Africa hopes to emulate, and many of whom share the colonial history of the continent, teach and learn all subjects in their own languages throughout the education systems (Djité, 2011b). Many of these countries are just as multilingual as African countries are.

Even more remarkable are the examples of Japanese doctors who are learning to communicate with non-Japanese-speaking patients in English, and the Australian approach to multiculturalism, where community languages are part of the school curriculum in a number of states and territories, broadcast on public radio and television, offered as options at the Higher School Certificate (with bonus points), and available in hospitals and the courts of law with the help of trained community and court interpreters (Djité, 1994). The European Union currently uses 24 official languages, and in the European Parliament, translators and interpreters represent over 30 per cent of its staff (European Parliament, 2019). While English remains the common language of business, the British Academy's Born Global project has been producing free-to-use resources for universities, teachers, employers, researchers and students to contribute to the emergence of an internationally mobile, highly skilled labour force in a number of languages, including English, to ensure that supply meets demand (British Academy, 2016).

### **Some encouraging examples from Africa**

Closer to home, community radio stations are playing an outreach role across the continent, sensitising rural populations to the issues that matter to them: health, social and economic issues (for an example of this, see Hessana, this volume). Local languages and/or lingua francas are often used on state radio and television for commercials.

In July 2017, Africanews reported that South Sudan was seeking to adopt Swahili as an official language (as it is designated as the lingua franca of the East African Community which South Sudan recently joined), and looking to Tanzania to help (Akwei, 2017).

In Senegal, the birthplace of Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first six officially recognised national languages of this country, namely Wolof, Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer and Soninke, made their entry into the national parliament, or National Assembly, on 2 December 2014, two days after the Summit of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie in Dakar. As the President of the National Assembly, Mustapha Niasse, put it (my emphasis):

*The national languages are not wolves! They are, first and foremost, the basis of our cultural heritage! The French language cannot be hindered by our national languages, but it must not hinder them either.*

Even the opposition agreed, as Modou Diagne Fada, President of the Liberal Group, added:

*It is not because one does not understand French that one cannot be elected as a member of parliament.*

**RFI (2014)**

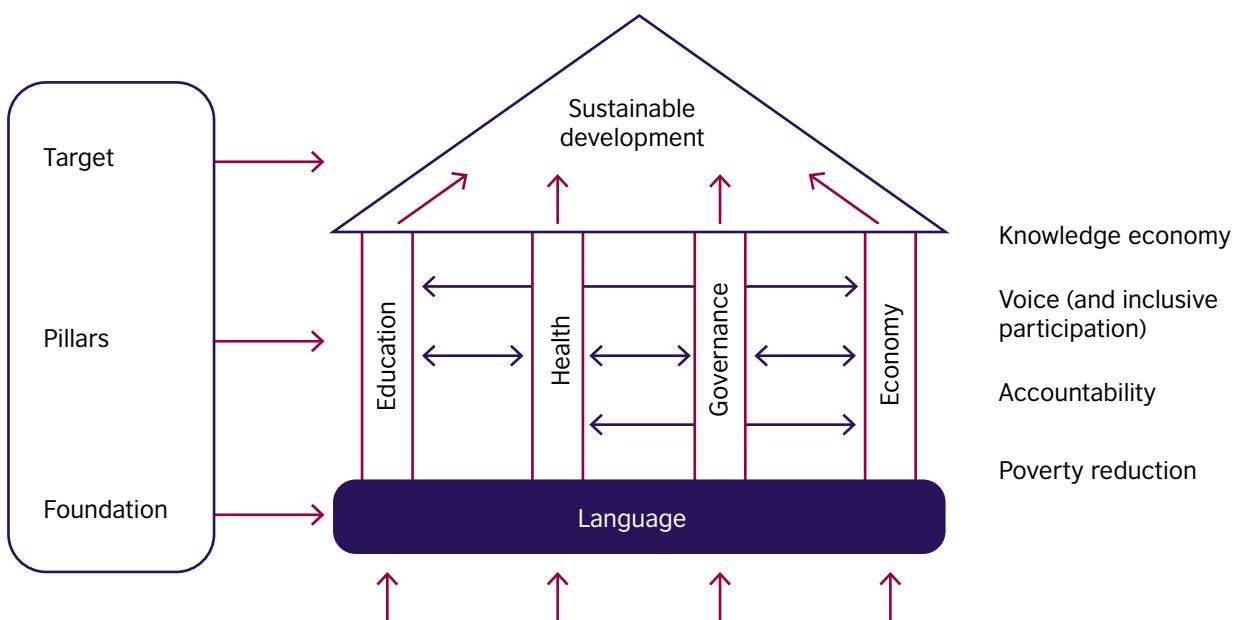
On 2 and 3 August 2017, the AfDB and the Office of the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman held a meeting with civil society organisations (CSOs) on environmental and social management, access to recourse and conflict resolution in development projects supported by the AfDB and World Bank Group, with a view to improving accountability of development projects in West Africa. CSOs insisted on the use of local languages in designing and producing community engagement toolkits, and on using audio versions of the kits in the local languages.

### The necessary paradigm shift in multilingual advocacy: Not 'exceptional', just efficient

There are those who feel that they are making a useful contribution advocating for language or for multilingual policies on the basis of cultural enrichment or cultural exception, but people do not need their language to be 'different' or 'exceptional'. Language does not exist in a vacuum and is not at the periphery of development. In fact, language goes well beyond issues of culture, spirituality, traditions and identity: language and multilingualism help reduce barriers to the active involvement of the majority of people in sustainable development activities.

People do not need their language so that they can add to the admirable diversity and wealth of the world; they simply need it to learn efficiently, to produce efficiently, to improve their living conditions and to meet their needs and the needs of future generations. They need their language to be efficient in controlling their own destiny (Djité, 2008, 2012, 2014), and we have objective tools (i.e. education, health, the economy and governance) to explore the nexus between language and sustainable development. Researchers interested in language issues should explore these tools to gain a better understanding of the role of language in sustainable development, and how the two interact in the real world. Figure 3 illustrates these interactions.

**Figure 3: The nexus between language and sustainable development**



## Conclusion

Over 20 years ago, the *Harare Declaration* (1997) boldly called for:

*A democratic Africa, where development is not construed in narrow economic goals; but instead, in terms of a culturally valued way of living together, and within a broader context of justice, fairness and equity for all, respect for linguistic rights and human rights, including those of minorities.*

Twenty-three years later, inequality in Africa is fuelling poverty, as decades of record GDP growth have benefited a wealthy elite and left millions of ordinary people behind. As a result, poverty has declined more slowly in Africa than in any other region of the world, and, driven by population growth, a further 250 to 350 million people could be living in conditions of abject poverty in the next 15 years, affecting women, young people and children the most (Oxfam, 2017: p. 6).

Poverty, it must be remembered, is not simply the World Bank's measure of earning an income of less than \$1.90 a day. It is multidimensional: poverty is also not being able to express one's most basic needs. In many cases, poverty is undergirded by language as a vector of the great divide between the elite and the majority of the people. Unless this majority is given voice, this constrained capacity will continue to be one of the major obstacles to sustainable development on the continent.

We may hear, in academic conferences, that language is not only to be considered within the framework of a single discipline; that it is the first step towards inclusion and inclusive participation; that it is a powerful instrument to connect diversity, build trust and improve communication in the widest sense; and that it plays a key role in accessing essential services and helping achieve one's full potential. But these are nothing more than assertions by researchers interested in language issues.

Such assertions may help articulate the convictions of language specialists that there is an alternative to the language policy *status quo*, but that is all they do. Making such statements is not enough to convince the layperson, who has been told for decades that their language is not good enough to function in a globalising world (see Lüpke et al., this volume, and Trudell, this volume, for discussions of this challenge in the context of education).

It is not easy to make the case for language. Only the results of well-designed empirical studies will make significant headway in helping the layperson, the politician or the economist understand the role and place of language in society. Part of this endeavour will require asking the hard questions.

For instance, is language a necessary step to economic inclusion? Perhaps a cost-benefit analysis of foreign language imposition in the areas of education, health, the economy and governance over the last 60 years would help show that 'not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted', a statement attributed to Einstein. Sustainable development may not hinge on language alone, but it is also clear that it does not hinge on economic growth alone (Djité, 2009). Just like health and the economy, language is the foundation, the maker and the marker of sustainable development.

A number of questions have been asked throughout this chapter; most of them have yet to be answered satisfactorily and have yet to be investigated. This is where the change of mindset and paradigm becomes necessary. Achieving SDG 8 and making the link between language, skills and sustainable growth requires researchers interested in language issues to refocus their energies and collect empirical data in areas such as health and the economy, to better understand the fragilities and vulnerabilities in these crucial sectors that impede the capacity development required for sustainable development.

This data will help identify gaps where effective and efficient language policies are required to reduce these fragilities and vulnerabilities and lead to SDG 8's stated goal of 'growth for all' that enriches and opens up new paths of freedom. These efforts must lead us all to a point where, in the words of Lao Tzu: 'When the best leader's work is done, the people will say, "We have done it ourselves."

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# 15. Linguistic diversity, formal education and economic development: The Sub-Saharan African chicken-and-egg dilemma?<sup>1</sup>

Salikoko S Mufwene

## Abstract

The traditional discourse on reforming education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has typically both presented the reforms as a prerequisite to economic development and suggested that the changes begin with the elementary level. I join scholars who have disputed these categorical positions, showing that adequate reforms depend on significant financial investments, which presuppose strong economic development. I also argue against the *status quo*, which has privileged the former European colonial languages as media of education and made most SSA schools less productive than they should be. On the other hand, I advocate against turning SSA countries into cultural islands disconnected from the rest of the world intellectually and economically.

## Introduction

In this chapter, I address the following questions (among others), although not necessarily in the same order.

1. Is linguistic diversity an obstacle to providing adequate formal education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)?
2. Does linguistic diversity impede economic development?
3. Is universal education a prerequisite to economic development, or is it the other way around?

My answers to the first two questions are negative. I argue that linguistic diversity plays a negligible negative role in SSA's economic underdevelopment.

Regarding question 2, political conflicts in various SSA countries may be invoked and linked to (ethno)linguistic diversity. Politicians have actually often blamed their inability to foster national unity on this state of affairs. I argue below that mismanagement, cronyism and corruption, associated with selfish politics and policies on the part of political rulers, have transformed (ethno)

linguistic diversity into an apparent cause of the economic underdevelopment<sup>2</sup> and, consequently, the deplorable conditions of schools in SSA.

Regarding whether universal education is a prerequisite to economic development or vice versa, my answer is longer and multifaceted. Schooling is a costly investment, not only because some party (*viz.* the state, the parents or both) has to pay for the education of the youth but also because it takes manual labour away from particularly agriculture and domestic activities. In polities with underdeveloped economies, children have traditionally contributed to sustaining the livelihood of the vast majority of the national populations, as they have helped their parents with various chores in the field or at home. Thus, despite its merits, schooling also undermines some traditional economic activities, unless these have been modernised and productivity has increased or been sustained independently. For the parents, schooling is a risky investment if the yield is not obvious, especially considering the high rate of unemployment in the vast majority of SSA polities.

The investment is riskier if, in addition to literacy, formal education may not provide the practical knowledge that is needed for some non-intellectual jobs in the economic system (Vincent, 2000). Overall, economic underdevelopment not only prevents adequate formal education but also makes the latter unaffordable for the parents and the state, as I show below.

I start the discussion with what I understand by 'economic development'. I go on to tackle the relationship between economic development and the success of reforms in the school systems, showing that there is no chicken-and-egg dilemma in this respect. I then go on to advocate for using indigenous languages as media of education, despite societal multilingualism in SSA. The following section explains why it is useful to teach foreign languages – not just major European colonial languages – (more) adequately, as subjects. I conclude with a summary of my views.

1. I'm deeply indebted to Cécile B Vigouroux for invaluable feedback on the draft of this essay, especially in reminding me how confusing the economists' discourse, which is not uniform, can be to a linguist. I'm also grateful to the editors for their feedback. I remain alone responsible for the remaining shortcomings.
2. The literature may owe this mistaken position to Fishman (1966) and other linguists inspired by the European one-nation-one-language political ideology. In the wake of the independence of several countries of the Global South, Fishman feared that societal multilingualism would impede national unity and economic development. Language economists such as Alesina et al. (2003) and Ginsburg and Weber (2011), who characterise this situation as ethnolinguistic fractionalisation, see it as entailing wastefulness especially in translation costs.

## What is 'economic development'?

There have been reports of economic growth in some SSA countries. In fact, the news means no more than that the nations have produced larger quantities of commodities. These do not necessarily translate into more jobs for the working-age population nor better wages for the adults who are employed in the formal economy (see, for example, Djité, 2008; Vigouroux, 2013, 2018). According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO),<sup>3</sup> the vast majority of working-age Sub-Saharan Africans survive on the practice of informal economy, which represents over 66 per cent of total employment, with 'the vulnerable employment rate – the share of own-account workers and unpaid family workers in total employment – [...] estimated at 76.6% in 2014'.

The formal economy is either stagnating or deteriorating, or just growing unevenly, employing apparently at best 34 per cent of the working-age population (according to the ILO's report), and probably much less in several countries. In the meantime, the population growth rate in SSA is among the highest in the world: four to five per cent per year in most of SSA as opposed to one per cent in, for instance, North America and China by 2015.<sup>4</sup> This means that, in relation to the rate of economic growth, families have on average disproportionately more and more mouths to feed, while they can hardly afford (good) healthcare and adequate schooling for the young. According to the World Bank (2015), 'nearly half of all youth in the continent' were out of school in 2015.

While the relevant countries may be experiencing economic growth, they are still in the state of economic underdevelopment.

Peet and Hartwick articulate 'economic development' as follows:

*Development means making a better life for everyone. [...] a better life for most people means, essentially, meeting basic needs: sufficient food to maintain good health; a safe, healthy place in which to live; affordable services available to everyone; and being treated with dignity and respect.*

**Peet & Hartwick (2009: p. 1)**

A great deal of the process of economic development involves creating (more) jobs and enabling the working-age population to be self-reliant, capable of meeting their financial needs and ensuring their well-being comfortably. Among other things, it should enable the workers to secure adequate homes for their families, have access to sanitation resources, pay for their healthcare (if it is not

free), and afford the costs of schooling their children at the primary and secondary levels. As pointed out by several contributors to *Transforming Our World* (UNESCO, 2015), it should have the long-term effect of reducing economic and social inequities between members of a population, such as between socio-economic classes, genders, ethnicities, and the rural and urban environments (see also Rassool, 2007).

According to Kamwangamalu (2016), economic development should reduce poverty. The latter is characterised by Mohanty (2017: p. 261) not so much as 'absence of income' but as 'relative absence of capability for functioning or for engaging in the pursuit of some desired outcome (e.g., working [i.e., having employment], having some leisure, leading a life of health, or being literate)'. Quoting from Dreze and Sen (2002: pp. 35–36), he characterises economic freedom itself as 'the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead', including dispensing with what they do not need, as opposed to not being able to afford what they need to live well.

Unfortunately, inequities persist in SSA. Wide wage gaps still remain between the salaries of white- and blue-collar workers, between those of regular healthcare providers or teachers and those of high-ranking administrators, while inequalities are scandalously huge between those of members of the government and those of the people they govern. The system fosters cronyism and corruption, which handicap economic development.

Economic development requires not only companies that want to invest in the industry and a population that is willing or ready to work but also governments that invest in and for the human capital. Governments must provide adequate infrastructures, including hospitals and sanitation services, electricity and running water, as well as reliable means of transportation to and from work and school, and adequate transportation infrastructure for the distribution of raw materials and finished products, aside from providing affordable housing.

More than half a century since independence, the reality is still rather grim in many, if not most, SSA countries. Healthcare is inadequate, there are no garbage disposal services, running water is available only in some city neighbourhoods and absent in rural areas, and roads are still unpaved and impassable after rain, etc. Rural exodus has not only created overpopulated 'cities' but also transformed the latter into 'mega-villages' (Mufwene, 2010a),<sup>5</sup> in which people would hardly survive without extended-family support networks and/or resourceful

3. [www.ilo.org/addisababa/whats-new/WCMS\\_377286/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/addisababa/whats-new/WCMS_377286/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed on 5 May 2018, no longer available). See also Oosthuizen et al. (2016) for similar observations.
4. *Our World in Data* – see <https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth#country-trends-over-the-last-centuries> (accessed on 20 May 2018).
5. The reason for this derisive term is the collapse of the basic infrastructure for utility services that an urban environment requires to function adequately, especially if it is expanding both demographically and spatially.

engagement in informal economy. In many cases, the living conditions of the masses of the populations are worse than at the pre-independence level, as much as the colonisers neglected the Natives (Rodney, 1972; Mandani, 1996)!

To be sure, one should not overlook the nature of nationwide poverty in which trade with the Global North and financial constraints imposed by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have driven most of the 'postcolonial countries' (Rassool, 2007). One must nonetheless underscore as principal reasons for these conditions lack of commitment, misplaced priorities and inadequate development plans on the part of SSA governments. After all, a number of Asian former European colonies, such as India and Malaysia, are managing much better than SSA countries, although they too have problems.

The evidence for misplaced priorities lies in, among other things, the building of beautiful presidential palaces and national assembly buildings, state-of-the-art stadiums and roads connecting presidential palaces to their residents' preferred destinations. It can also be found in the mansions the rulers have bought abroad, their rich foreign bank accounts and the fact that the state pays for the healthcare the same privileged people receive in the best hospitals abroad, in addition to the foreign schools that their children can routinely afford to attend. SSA governments cannot continue to blame the former colonisers and the Global North for their countries' continuous economic underdevelopment. They can certainly devise ways of reducing, if not escaping, the inequalities of their trade with the Global North. China has managed to do this.

I doubt that language economists such as Ginsburg and Weber (2011) will disagree with my position that linguistic diversity plays no obvious role in this declining trajectory of SSA economies. Ironically, one can also argue that the regressive economies help sustain linguistic diversity. Indeed, whereas I thought in Mufwene (2008) that cities were the ecologies where SSA ethnic languages gave way to urban lingua francas, I have pointed out since then (Mufwene, 2010a) that their evolution into mega-villages has actually made it possible for the ethnic languages to be maintained as home and in-group vernaculars. Socialisation with people of one's own ethnolinguistic background, for the purposes of surviving deprivation (as noted above), favours the retention of heritage languages. Residents of these destitute neighbourhoods sustain plurilingualism in the urban vernacular for interactions with outsiders. While most children show preference for the urban vernacular, they still develop passive competence in their parents' heritage language(s), which they may activate as adults or when they visit the extended family in rural areas (Bokamba, 2008). Besides, rural exodus brings more and more speakers of the ethnic languages to the city.

## Economy and schools

The purpose of formal education is, among other things, to prepare students to become informed about ways of the world, including the political and socio-economic structures in which they evolve. It should prepare them to be literate and capable of absorbing a great deal of information disseminated in writing, so that they may operate adequately in addressing health issues and economic challenges, using skills they acquired in school for handling various practical matters. In some cases, especially in vocational schools, they learn specific skills required to practise some professions, such as nursing, mechanics, carpentry, masonry, tailoring and agriculture, for which the average citizen need not attend higher education.

On the other hand, although higher education prepares students for the white-collar sector and for research, it may not provide specific skills that can be acquired only on the job, by some sort of apprenticeship. Formal education should thus make it easier to absorb profession-specific technical information that employers provide. It should make students capable of learning through tutoring or on their own, such as when academics retool themselves in the profession or when one must apply their computing skills to learning what is required to participate in a specific development project.

In other words, adequate formal education should prepare the young for the world, including the economic system, while the latter, especially the industry, may dictate some of the contents of the curricula of secondary and tertiary education. This is a point well made by Wright (2016) relative to the impact of industrialisation as an alternative to agriculture-based economy on the curriculum of formal education in the Global North. In the case of France, part of this influence was the pressure to teach students the language of the new industry, *viz.* (Parisian) French – increasingly being preferred over Patois and/or other, regional French dialects – during the Industrial Revolution. Similar economic pressures favoured the spread of English as the medium of education and of literacy in the British Isles, especially since the rise of the textile industry in the 18th century in, for instance, Ireland (Corrigan, 2010). In both cases, migrations to the city – where the different dialects came to coexist with the language of the new, industrial economy – played an important role (Wright, 2016; Mufwene, 2020). According to Wright:

*Cities and industrial conurbations were linguistic melting pots: speakers of different English dialects lost their specificities and Welsh, Scots and Gaelic speakers shifted to English. This could happen even in parts of the state where English was not the indigenous language.*

**Wright (2016: p. 455)**

What publications such as Graff (1981) and Vincent (2000) have also shown is that economic development does not require the state or some other private institution, such as missionaries, to found schools first, although educated labour is expected to contribute significantly to the success of economic development as a collective enterprise. It is for this reason that industry in particular may complement the state in investing in formal education, either in funding the material infrastructure or in awarding scholarships and/or fellowships, as well as opportunities for internship, to students. It may influence the contents of what is taught in subjects such as physics, chemistry and economics in response to its labour needs. It takes a successful economic system, with some vision, to make such investments beyond the commitment that is expected of the state as the political institution that plans the overall welfare of its citizenry. The state itself depends on a well-functioning economy to accumulate the financial resources needed to meet its obligations to the citizenry, including providing a safe environment for them.

Unfortunately, most SSA governments have failed to meet these expectations and continue to depend on foreign aid to support formal education. It is disheartening to admit that compared to the colonial period, when fewer people had access to schooling, the quality of education from elementary school to higher education has declined. The various reasons for this negative evolution include persistent economic underdevelopment, mismanagement, corruption, and greed for power and wealth on the part of the ruling class from the top level downward.

Education has woefully been neglected in various ways. Teachers are not well paid and often do not receive their salaries regularly, aside from the fact that many of them have not been well trained. Most parents are too poor to enrol or keep their children in school. Owing to uncontrolled population growth and the collapse of agriculture, the resources of the extended family become woefully too limited to support the formal education of children, especially if they must relocate to a small town several kilometres/miles away for this or attend boarding schools. There are also too few schools, even at the elementary level, and these are overcrowded. No transportation is provided to shuttle the pupils between home and school. Many families can hardly feed themselves adequately, schools provide no lunch, and some school-age children must work to help their parents get some money for food. Poverty inhibits school attendance.

Schools are underfunded (particularly in rural areas), while governments rely on missionaries to keep them running. The physical infrastructure is terribly inadequate or deteriorating; even elite private schools have not been able to sustain the quality that earned them prestige during the colonial period. Few schools have even small libraries, and there are generally no city libraries besides the few provided by the Alliance Française or the British Council in limited facilities. Bookstores and university libraries are under-equipped, when they exist. When some books are available, they are unaffordable for many students, who depend on class notes to regurgitate what has been taught in class. The living conditions prevent students from reading at home, especially when electricity is either irregular or inaccessible.

This is the general condition that has caused the informal economy to thrive in SSA (Oosthuizen et al., 2016), while its little formal counterpart inherited from the colonial period has stagnated at best. If one of the goals of formal education is to prepare pupils and students for the economic development of their nations, things are not going well in most SSA countries. If adequate formal education needs the support of a well-functioning economy, the situation remains grim in most SSA countries, especially when they are mired in political conflicts too.

On the other hand, it is evident that while schools can contribute to economic development by preparing individuals intellectually and linguistically to follow written or spoken standardised information (Bamgbose, 1994), a minimum of economic development securing funds for them to operate must be in place. According to UNESCO's *Transforming Our World* (2015), it was after China modernised its economic system that it raised its literacy rate and in fact also modernised its education system. To be sure, the modernisation of the education system also enabled China to diversify its formal education, all the way to the production of first-rate programmes in science, technology, engineering and mathematics all taught in Mandarin. The country is now a superpower in the space industry and doing all it can to reduce poverty. The same can be said of India, although it is doing less well in the reduction of poverty.<sup>6</sup>

The above countries have followed the same evolutionary trajectory as Europe and anglophone North America, and other places in the developed world. Economic development enabled better funding of schools and even the building of more. Improved economy has raised the proportion of enrolments, especially when elementary and secondary education is (almost) free, while the competition among schools has helped raise the quality of education.

6. It is not clear what role education in English has played in this disappointment. On the other hand, the huge brain drain from India, especially in the computing industry, attests to the success of at least part of its education system.

## Language and the decline of formal education in SSA

The deterioration of the formal economy inherited from the colonial period, general economic underdevelopment and inadequate governance are definitely not the only reasons why schools in SSA have not been high-yielding enterprises. The practice of dispensing education in a former colonial language, which is practised at home by only a small fraction of the elite families (Brock-Utne, 2017), is another problem. There are many reasons that can be invoked to justify this poor choice of the medium of education, including the fear of favouring particular ethnolinguistic groups and thereby disadvantaging the remaining students (demographic majorities or minorities) who do not speak them (natively). The foreign official language putatively prevents the fractionalisation of the nation as a union of populations speaking diverse and mutually unintelligible languages.

Another reason is undoubtedly the fact that the ruling classes, which are themselves products of colonial-style education and have used the colonial languages as emblems of their socio-economic privileges, believe that the metropolitan education systems are superior and their languages better developed and suited as media of instruction.<sup>7</sup> The socio-economic inequalities between the rulers and the overwhelming majorities of the populations they govern are so outrageous that parents are also suspicious of changes that include adopting indigenous languages as media of instruction. Hoping that formal education may still help their families out of poverty, the parents fear that the changes would (further) exclude the children from the 'European knowledge and power' (Makoni & Trudell, 2009: p. 37) enjoyed by the small elite. (See also Fandy & Vigouroux, 2018 for a similar report of the fear of some parents in Benin.) However, as I explain below, parents of graduates who have been unable to find (good-paying) jobs have also realised that formal education in European languages without economic development has been a wasteful investment.

As for policymakers and language economists who advocate the *status quo*, out of fear of ethnolinguistic fractionalisation, they overlook the fact that Sub-Saharan Africans have typically been plurilingual (Lüpke & Storch, 2013) and typically also speak the dominant indigenous language of their region as a lingua franca (Laitin, 1992). If pupils did not speak it before starting school, they usually do after enrolling in it. They definitely learn the lingua franca naturalistically (the traditional way in SSA) and faster than the European language, which they hardly practise outside the classroom, especially if their parents do not speak it at all.<sup>8</sup>

According to UNESCO's *Transforming Our World* (2015), fewer than 20 per cent of SSA populations can be claimed to speak the European official languages fluently. Brock-Utne (2017) reports much lower statistics regarding opportunities for school children to use them as home languages. As noted by Chaudenson (2008), most of the teachers themselves do not have practical competence in the media of education. These disheartening statistics reveal a wasteful investment in time and money for more or less 60 years of formal education in a European language since independence.

Ideally, schools should provide education in the language of the economy (preferably an indigenous one!), in which graduates are expected to function. It is tempting to conclude that SSA governments have privileged the formal economy, introduced by European colonisers. However, even here the European official languages have been used typically only in the white-collar sector, by individuals doing highly technical work (in which they have been trained in vocational or technical schools) and by foremen and bureaucrats, who have also acted as intermediaries, interpreters or translators in relation to the people they serve or oversee (Mufwene, 2017a). Many of these use the languages more for writing and reading than for speaking, as those who share the same vernacular or lingua franca and do not find the languages particularly emblematic of their socio-economic class assume it more natural to talk with one another in their indigenous language. In the army and the police force, it is the officers who speak (with variable levels of competence) the European official languages.

Otherwise, the remaining employees, the majority of the 20 per cent or so people employed in the formal economy, do their jobs in indigenous languages, like their counterparts in informal economy. This linguistic 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1982) is a legacy of the way the modern economy was designed during the colonial period, primarily to produce raw materials for the economic development of Europe (Rodney, 1972). The labour force for this, from producing rubber, cotton and other agricultural commodities to mining, was not expected to speak the European languages. This is quite in the spirit of the often-quoted Thomas Babington Macaulay's (1835) *Minute on Education in India*, according to which the colonial auxiliaries trained in English were expected to interface between the minority of British colonial agents and the large masses of indigenous populations speaking different languages.

7. I argue explicitly against this position below.

8. Boarding schools in which students must speak the European languages even during their social interactions outside the classroom are too few in number to claim the practice successful on the national scale.

It is ironical that post-independence SSA would subscribe to the same exploitation, subjugation and marginalisation regime it had fought to liberate itself from (Mandani, 1996) and continues to prevent the success of the vast majority of its students in formal education. Quality and successful education in indigenous languages would prepare school graduates, especially from secondary schools, to function more creatively in informal economy, which provides the only realistic alternative to unemployment to date. After all, this is the only part of national economies that functions productively and needs as much support as it can get from governments (Oosthuizen et al. 2016). What has typically been overlooked is the fact that the economies and schools of the Global North generally function in their national languages, which are spoken by the vast majority of the 'autochthonous' populations, although, to be sure, English has increasingly been used for (internationally oriented) research in higher education and for communication with foreign branches of multinational corporations.<sup>9</sup>

Another reason typically given for privileging former colonial languages over indigenous ones is isolation from the rest of the world. It is ironical that SSA leaders should justify their education policies primarily relative to the former colonial metropoles and, generally, to the Global North rather than in relation to domestic needs for economic development. This ideology reflects the colonial regime according to which the economic development of the colonies had to serve the European Industrial Revolution first, regardless of the extent of costs to the colonies as sources of the needed raw materials and as settings in which the labour force was both recruited for production and excluded from the profits (Rodney, 1972).

Interfacing between the indigenous labourers and the European employers, the 'colonial auxiliaries' made life easier for the colonisers, many of whom did not bother to learn the indigenous languages. The Europeans were hardly concerned that the foreign medium of education limited the proportion of students that completed secondary education or made it to the tertiary level, if this was in place at all. The latter represented a group of exceptionally talented and determined individuals who could meet the tough demands of the education system.

What the French identified as '*mission civilisatrice*' was not intended to be inclusive, as highlighted by Mazrui and Mazrui (1998). It's shocking that SSA governments have

not asked themselves why there is such a disconnect between the medium of education and language of the workforce in both the formal and the informal economy, contrary to the system in Europe. SSA governments may think of the current state of formal education as a facilitator of economic development in the way discussed above; in reality they have perpetuated 'elite closure' (Weis, 1981; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Worny, 2015).

Given the poor performance of schools with using former European colonial languages as media of education, some may be surprised that parents themselves still prefer seeing their children educated in the same languages. As noted above, the answer lies in the fact that they expect formal education to make their children more competitive in an economic system that has privileged these languages. Since the colonial period, the European languages have been perceived as carrying more economic capital and facilitating better and more knowledge of the skills needed to be more competitive in the socio-economic structure (Adsera & Pytlíkova, 2016). The official language promises socio-economic mobility (Wright, 2016), although it is another story whether the economy makes it possible to satisfy this expectation after graduation. Parents wonder how useful it is to educate their children in an/their indigenous language if the best rewards from schooling are associated with the ex-colonial language (Rubagumya, 2009: p. 55).

Unfortunately, as noted above, the experience of most parents and graduates has been frustrating, especially those without particular support networks within the elite class and/or who cannot buy their way to success through bribery. Contrary to the tradition of wanting to start reforms with schools, gradually from the elementary school and ultimately to higher education, it appears that the medium-of-instruction reforms issue should start at the governance and within the white-collar sector of the economy, which should be operating primarily in indigenous languages. It is in these domains that indigenous languages, especially the major ones that also function as regional lingua francas, should be turned into lucrative and beneficial capitals associated with senior, important positions and well-paying jobs. Competence in European and other foreign languages should continue to be rewarded but only for jobs that require dealing with the outside world. The socio-economic structure and governance should make life easier for the citizenry in making technical competence in indigenous languages advantageous.

9. I use the word 'autochthonous' rather provocatively here, because European politicians and scholars working on 'super-diversity' in Western Europe use it, in reference to their indigenous populations (Mufwene, 2017a), at variance with the use of 'indigenous' in reference to non-European populations elsewhere (Mufwene, 2017b). Regarding the use of English in multinational corporations in Europe, note that this practice is limited to their top echelons, which bridge the different branches across national boundaries. The rest of the enterprises function in the national languages. Like the McDonald's franchise, Microsoft functions in French in France, in German in Germany, in Spanish in Spain, etc., contrary to Phillipson's (2003) and Hagège's (2006) fear that Europe is, or may be, evolving toward monolingualism in English. Autochthonous employees in the top echelons still talk to each other in their national languages.

The practice of indigenous languages in the white-collar sector of the formal economy should provide to parents the justification for education in them rather than in European former colonial languages; and the latter should be treated as accessories rather than as prerequisites to competitiveness in the search for domestic high-income employment. Although transition problems are to be expected in the implementation of the kind of reforms proposed here, the solution appears to lie in a top-down approach.

One should not be waiting for schools or those running them to 'develop' the indigenous languages for technical communication in the government and the industry, because schools generally do not prepare students for specific jobs. Only the professionals themselves should develop the specific terminologies needed in their trade, which can then filter down to schools or can be learned as part of the training provided by the employer. In formal education, the reforms should be global and radical, involving all levels of education concurrently, with the indigenous educators mandated to innovate the academic metalanguage. Otherwise, what would be the point of teaching pupils in indigenous languages in elementary school and have them face the challenge of doing secondary or tertiary education in a language they do not command well? Workshops should be organised to standardise the technical neologisms.

The option of using foreign languages in tertiary/higher education would be a professional requirement for some subjects only, for those students who find it useful to connect professionally with the outside world. Developing such linguistic skills should simply be an additional option available to those who are ambitious for such jobs or for further training abroad. It should not be an alternative to education in indigenous languages catered primarily to the domestic economy, politics, health system, research infrastructure and the overall welfare of the citizenry.<sup>10</sup>

Continental Western Europe has made it possible for students to take some classes in English, although it is not their official language, largely because of the larger intellectual job market availed by the European Union, in which English is the dominant lingua franca. Students still

have the option of following a curriculum completely in their national languages, because the national education systems respond first to the domestic needs of the nations. Jobs that are not intended for external markets function in the national languages. This is precisely when the European model must be followed, albeit partially, in that they all turned away from Latin, which had privileged an elite class. SSA should of course not copy the monolingualism ideology against which some European ethnic or regional nationalists are rising now.

Initiatives such as by Mongaba (2012, 2013), which teach subjects such as chemistry and physics in an indigenous language (Lingala in this case), deserve more attention and support than they have received, though there arises the perennial problem of where the funding should come from.<sup>11</sup> Of course the government, which is in charge of the education system and the welfare of the citizenry, should fund such work. It should in fact mobilise the academia in the enterprise and reward those that engage in it. School graduates should not be penalised for lack of competence in languages of the former colonisers if they are applying for jobs that are not intended to communicate with the outside world.<sup>12</sup>

While it is important for domestic economies to be connected with global markets, the primary goal of economic development, as discussed at the outset of this chapter, is to attend to the welfare of the citizenry, which must be served in indigenous languages. The mandate of the government is to serve the citizenry, not to rule or dominate it (in the colonial style) as if the latter had to serve the interests and the privileges of the former.

There are models that can be followed, albeit with adaptations to SSA, such as that of francophone Quebec, with the economic empowerment of French, or that of the Afrikaner population in South Africa, with the economic and academic empowerment of Afrikaans relative to English, understandably minus the oppression and exclusion of non-Whites that came along with it. What should be avoided is definitely the model of Ireland, where the academic promotion of Irish has been offset by the retention of English as the language of the economy and government. What is being recommended

10. Contrary to Rubagumya (2009: p. 61) the indigenous languages should not be used '*in addition to*' European languages (italics in the original). It is the European and other important foreign languages that should be taught as optional subjects, popular as they may become.
11. Pilot work by the MIT-Haiti Initiative, teaching STEM subjects and using related technology in Haitian Creole, 'the language fluently spoken by all Haitians in Haiti,' has increased pupils' and students' participation in class discussions and improved their ability to learn successfully. Teachers have been developing the relevant academic terminology as they go, benefiting from feedback from the pupils and students (DeGraff & Stump, 2018). Fandy and Vigouroux (2018) also report that usage of indigenous languages in some schools of Benin, as part of the ELAN (*Ecoles et Langues Nationales*) initiative has increased enthusiasm and participation among pupils. Even some of the parents are allegedly more involved in the education of their children, since language is no longer a barrier to their understanding what the children are being taught in school. The enthusiasm is also raised by the fact that the curriculum is better grounded in local cultures than that in French. On the other hand, because the government and white-collar sectors of the economy still operate in French, some Beninese parents fear that the initiative, which is actually bilingual in French and indigenous languages, may be a veiled ploy of elite closure.
12. By the same token, if SSA governments are so concerned with communicating with the outside world, they should consider also funding programmes for teaching African languages of wider communication. Individual SSA countries should seek to communicate not just with European nations but also with other African nations. If all or most of them do what is advocated in this chapter, then they should also emancipate themselves from the need to use European languages to communicate with each other. The emancipation would be similar to what they have accomplished to some extent in air transportation and telecommunication, having discontinued the old, expensive practice of passing through the colonial metropole to fly to or communicate with a neighbouring SSA country.

here is the same thing that Western European nations did, although they also promoted a one-nation-one-language monolingualism ideology, which has come to haunt some of them (as with Basque and Catalan in Spain) and which SSA should not follow, as I show below.

Chaos may be avoided by organising reform-related workshops, inspired perhaps by how reforms were made in places such as Malaysia. Bilingualism in the style of higher education in Western European countries other than the United Kingdom and France, which allow usage of English for some disciplines, is also worth considering, bearing in mind that even in Europe such practice is supported by strong economic and well-organised administrative systems that still operate in national languages. Concerns expressed by Phillipson (2003) and Hagège (2006) that Western Europe may be evolving toward monolingualism in English appear to be unfounded (Mufwene, 2010b). For instance, as much as the Dutch and Scandinavians accommodate people visiting their countries in communicating with them in English or some other European language, they have maintained their national languages as their vernaculars and languages of the domestic economy. It's simply unfortunate that anglophones do not reciprocate.

The foregoing leads us to a perennial excuse, *viz.* the indigenous languages need 'developing' to become adequate for academic purposes, for governance and for the white-collar sector of the economy. There are no languages that are not developed enough for adequate communication among their heritage speakers, *viz.* the societies that have shaped them over time. What the languages need is not 'development' but adaptations to new communication needs and functions in domains from which they have been excluded. Note that these were added by the colonisers as a superstratum to SSA's indigenous socio-economic structures to serve communicative functions that the new rulers introduced, *viz.* European-style governance, judiciary systems, formal education, etc. (Mufwene, 2017a). It is the indigenous experts in these domains, administrators and scholars alike, who are the most familiar with the relevant concepts, that should have competence and authority to make the adaptations needed in the indigenous languages, while academies can assist in standardising the innovations. These are indeed the kinds of adaptations that, for instance, the Romance languages underwent when they replaced Latin (of the elite class) as their acrolect. However, such reforms need not wait for academies to do the initial work, which can be overwhelming and slow, aside from possibly being too disconnected from the contexts of their practice.

The issue of (ethno)linguistic diversity comes up again, *viz.* whether governments can invest in all the indigenous languages of their respective countries, which are typically highly multilingual. It has often been argued that promoting just a subset of the languages would foster another form of social inequities, favouring a select few ethnic groups over the majority.

These concerns overlook the fact that the *status quo*, which has prompted many debates and unsuccessful (proposals for) reforms, has privileged a very small minority elite over an overwhelming majority. With the characterisations varying according to authors' lexical preferences, the majority has been ignored, marginalised, minoritised, peripheralised or disempowered economically. What the relevant politicians or scholars have overlooked is that the traditional practice of multilingualism, which has typically included a lingua franca, should appease their fears. If the local or regional lingua franca has been accepted as a common language, it is the one to be prioritised. It favours nobody, especially if the choice is for the urban variety, which has already diverged structurally from the ethnic language it has evolved from, as the ethnic speakers are no longer its model speakers. This is the case for Urban Wolof, Town Bemba, Lubumbashi Swahili, Urban Lingala, and the likes, as long as there is no ideology of purism, which can introduce to schools an artificial variety that pupils, students and even teachers will not recognise as their own language. This solution is consistent with realism regarding financial costs.

As a matter of fact, Cook (2009) draws our attention to Setswana-medium schools in South Africa. Their teachers want pupils to use/learn an idealised, pure rural variety that is contrary to the social trend, which favours the urban, presumably modern variety, which includes borrowings from English and Afrikaans. It can be self-defeating to impose as a scholastic language a variety that the intended users find no application for in real life. It's worse when the teachers themselves do not speak it and even use a European language as an emblem of their social status. One can learn from the experience of the Académie Française, whose efforts to sanitise the French language have been generally ignored by vernacular speakers. In many ways, the latter communicate adequately in science and technology without using the prescriptions of the Académie.

We must bear in mind that the foregoing is not advocacy for a one-nation-one-language ideology. A country should recognise all the major languages and assume some geographical complementary distribution among them. Provided some political adaptations, the Swiss model is worth considering. In multilingual countries, making sure that the other lingua francas are also part of the curriculum will ensure that the intra-national mobility of students educated in indigenous languages is not inhibited by language differences. And governments should become multilingual in the lingua francas, hopefully at a much lesser cost than the European Union. Local governments must be sensitive to the local vernaculars too, especially in order to accommodate residents of rural areas, although most of the latter naturally learn the lingua francas of their regions too. Following this suggestion may also help obliterate that legacy of the colonial rule that made it necessary for senior administrators and officers of the army and the

police, and even for health providers, to communicate with the indigenous people (in rural areas) through intermediaries.

The implementation of the reforms in schools is of course connected to what governments can afford to fund, such as the production of print materials and other technology in the indigenous languages. Such problems suggest that in some ways economic development is a prerequisite to adequate reforms in the education system.

Language advocates must fear the possibility that the proposed solution to the language issue in SSA schools may eventually lead to the vernacularisation of the media of education, their exclusive economic and political empowerment, and the apparent redundancy and eventual loss of ethnic vernaculars. I have addressed some of the relevant issues in Mufwene (2016, 2017b) in particular.

Those who have voiced this concern have typically overlooked the fact that it takes real change in the socio-economic structure, including the ways in which domains of language use are redistributed, in order for this feared disaster to occur. They have also ignored the fact that human rights (including speakers' natural claim to be integrated in economic development) prevail over the so-called 'language rights'.

Given how often language shift has occurred in the history of humankind all over the world (even in the very populations that have spread the so-called 'killer languages'), one still has to demonstrate that this process has generally been deleterious to the language shifters. Language shift has typically been a consequence of adaptations that the relevant speakers have made to changing socio-economic and political ecologies, as in the case of continental European immigrants to anglophone North America and the Celtic populations in the now European Romance countries and the British Isles. Their experiences predate those of Native Americans and Australian Aborigines, from which the literature on language endangerment and loss has extrapolated even to questionable cases around the world. Although there is value in documenting linguistic and cultural diversity, one still has to demonstrate that languages must be served by humans instead of them helping humans survive (Mufwene, 2013, 2017b).

## Should SSA countries not teach foreign languages in school?

This section may appear redundant, based on what has been said in passing in the above section. However, my position needs underscoring and elaborating. I have not advocated stopping teaching foreign languages in SSA's schools and turning the relevant countries into isolated cultural islands. The state will benefit from individuals who have functional competence in some foreign languages, for the purposes of diplomacy, trade

with foreign nations and, among other needs, the possibility of learning new technology and scientific developments abroad.

Thus, at least some schools should also be endowed with adequate financial support for advanced levels of foreign languages to be taught by competent teachers in the foreign languages themselves. The state should also enable gifted foreign-language students to have more training by immersion in the countries where the languages of their specialisation are spoken, while creating a lucrative domestic market for this advanced competence to be put into use. The state should likewise provide opportunities for students who are not specialising in foreign languages to acquire at least reading skills in the dominant foreign languages of their academic subject specialisation, so that their training can be competitive with that provided in other nations. Indeed, it all boils down again to a level of economic development that can afford the costs of adequate education.

However, such support for teaching foreign languages does not entail developing a school system that uses a foreign language as a universal medium of education and provides selective advantage to a privileged class of students who can also practise the language at home rather than to the most gifted ones. SSA should not cater its schools to the outside world before attending to its domestic socio-economic needs.

Contrary to the fear expressed by most policymakers, providing formal education at all levels in indigenous languages does not entail cutting connections with the rest of the world, especially the Global North. The addition of foreign languages as subjects makes it possible to maintain this connection in a way consistent with trends in the rest of the world. The languages with the most economic capital, based in part on how a country situates itself in world affairs and in relation to neighbouring countries, are those that should be given priority. In some ways, co-operation, hence communication with neighbouring SSA countries, should come before that with the rest of the world.

Regional alliances without the mediation of European colonial languages should make SSA countries stronger. There is no particular reason why the language of the former coloniser should be privileged, especially if only indigenous languages function as official languages. If there is a strong economy in place, the fact of functioning in indigenous languages is not a problem, as is evident from Japan, South Korea and China, among other places. These countries also show that if the national economy is developing, there will be fewer emigrations motivated by needs that cannot be satisfied at home. The cost of learning foreign languages may partly be paid for by those who need to travel or by investments that the state wants to make in competence in (some of) the languages.

## Conclusions

There is really no chicken-and-egg dilemma between economic development and formal education. The latter presupposes the former, although a well-educated population will increase the overall economic prosperity of a nation whose government is committed to the welfare of the citizenry. Literacy will enable the citizenry to educate itself and to stay informed about the world after graduation. It will enable individuals to follow instructions in the workplace without always being told by an overseer or supervisor what to do specifically in their job assignment, to do their own bookkeeping when they are self-employed, and to be more creative in the informal economy. It will also enable them to keep up with changing laws and protect their own interests, to participate in the valuation of what they produce, and to read the directions about the products they buy, especially those to be used in agriculture, etc. Informed citizens will participate better in the political process, keeping their government in check. A responsible government would want to invest in this part of (socio) economic development.

Adequate education is expensive and needs a significant financial investment in the physical infrastructure of schools, in the wages of its teachers and administrators, in equipment, including books and teaching technology, in the health of students and their parents, and in all sorts of programmes that guarantee that pupils and students acquire knowledge that meets the needs of economic development.

Education will be more successful when it is provided in languages that students and teachers command well, which in multilingual settings need not be the heritage languages of pupils and students. The choice of media of education must be consistent with linguistic practices in the regions where people and students attend school, just like the choice of the languages of governance (including official languages) and of the economy should be.

To be sure, reforms in this regard should proceed from the top down, so that it is evident at every stage of formal education why knowledge should be imparted in indigenous languages. The reforms should also be global, so that adaptations needed for the practice of the language in governance, in industry and in the academic sector involve the experts and practitioners themselves, with academies helping toward the standardisation of the terminologies and professional registers.

Language policies for education and the economy should facilitate the participation of the citizenry rather than accommodating the foreign market. When SSA economies get stronger, nationals of foreign countries will be as much interested in major SSA indigenous languages as SSA nationals are interested in theirs, depending on individual citizens' and institutions' interests.

The above recommendations are in no way intended to turn SSA countries into economic and political islands disconnected from worldwide trends in the global economy (especially trade), academia and diplomacy. This is precisely why it will still be necessary to invest practically in teaching foreign languages adequately in schools and in ways that serve the economic development of individual nations rather than advantaging a privileged elite class and promoting the interests of the Global North over the domestic ones. Overall, the teaching of languages as subjects should look first into ways of facilitating the mobility of the citizenry within their multilingual countries and within SSA itself, before thinking of mobility to the Global North, thereby fostering connectedness both within and without.

Adequate education is indeed expensive for the receiver too. The state as the provider and the overseer of the welfare of the citizenry should make it as affordable to the latter as possible. Adequate schooling is a long-term investment that will sustain economic development, in which the state must be engaged independently. Financial investment in formal education is investment in human capital, which is needed for economic growth and more economic development. The latter is the big catalyst chicken, which must be well fed in order to lay the eggs that feed adequate education.

I would be remiss to leave the reader with the impression that SSA governments should develop their national economies first before investing in education. Absolutely not. Developing schools is part of (socio)economic development; investment in schools should not be relegated to the back burner. My message is that the strength of formal education reflects that of the economy. Both should develop concurrently.

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# Part 4

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**Communication, peace and justice (SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions)**



# 16. Language, peace and intercommunity justice in Africa: The case of Kalam Arabic

Ahmat Hessana

## Abstract

The three dialectal varieties of Arabic in the Lake Chad Basin (border Arabic, rural Arabic and popular urban Arabic) form a lingua franca called Kalam Arabic. Reduced to the simple status of 'Shuwa' or 'Chadian' Arabic by linguists, in fact Kalam Arabic has a regional role to play in mastering the Quran and is a driving force for intercommunity harmony resulting in a discourse of peace and an investment in intercommunity justice. Ultimately, Kalam Arabic has become a genuine vector of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals among its speakers. Due to growing interest in Kalam Arabic among wider populations, the language eventually carved out a place for itself in an environment dominated by Hausa and Pulaar. Despite this, states such as Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria have neglected it in favour of literary Arabic.

## Introduction

This chapter sheds light on the status and place of Kalam Arabic (local Arabic) in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It focuses on building just, peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16) in the Lake Chad Basin. Of the six countries where speakers of this language are found, we choose three of them – Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria – for two reasons.

- These three states offer a distinctive spatial framework for assessing the implementation of the SDGs through the use of Kalam Arabic.
- It is especially in these border states in the heart of Africa that governments are reluctant to promote local vernacular Arabic, preferring literary Arabic, the teaching of which has produced Arabic-speaking graduates who find it difficult to integrate into the civil service, which is exclusively francophone or anglophone (Barka, 2016).

## The characteristics and roles of Kalam Arabic

The Arabic in question, also known as Shuwa Arabic, or Chadian Arabic by many scholars,<sup>1</sup> is better known in the region by the local term *Kalam Arab* (literal meaning: 'the Arabic language'). As this is the term that is recognised and used by people in all the countries of the Lake Chad Basin where it is spoken, I use its translated form, 'Kalam Arabic', throughout this chapter.

Kalam Arabic is defined here as the cross-border lingua franca which, like Mauritanian and Moroccan Arabic, retains its Semitic originality, but has expanded its lexicon by borrowing from neighbouring languages such as Kanuri, Bagirmi and Tubu languages, as well as through environmental substrates and certain morpho-phonological alterations. Three variants can be distinguished (Julien De Pommerol, 1997; Saleh, 1976; Brahim, 2007):

- border Arabic, i.e. that which is used for example in the border areas between Cameroon and Nigeria
- 'Birni' Arabic (or popular urban Arabic), spoken in urban areas
- Arabic 'dar-bāra' (or rural Arabic), the Arabic of the villages and camps of the Shuwa Arabs.

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## The dissemination of the Arabic language<sup>2</sup> throughout the world is a source of tremendous energy for co-operation and peace.

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO,  
18 December 2016 (UNESCO, 2016)

1. See for example the listing on Ethnologue: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/shu>

2. Bokova was speaking not only about literary Arabic, but also about Arabic dialects in Asia, North Africa and the Lake Chad Basin.

The particular characteristics of Kalam Arabic already contribute to the cultural integration of peoples and to the social struggle for intercommunity justice.<sup>3</sup> By borrowing words from neighbouring languages and operating in northern Cameroon as a second language of translation and interpretation (second only to Pulaar) – for Muslim sermons in mosques for example – Kalam Arabic is opening up to other Muslim communities in the Lake Chad Basin. Its use by activists of the *IYINA* movement (see below) indicates the important role it plays in social movements.

All the countries around Lake Chad are multilingual, but the status of languages does not necessarily correspond to their usefulness among the populations. In addition to the official languages (English, French and literary Arabic), the authorities recognise as national languages Hausa, Kanuri (in Nigeria and Niger), Pidgin English, Pulaar (in Cameroon and Nigeria) and Kalam Arabic (in Cameroon, Chad, Sudan and South Sudan). That is to say that in these countries, a national language (i.e. given this status through a recognised written form) is not official (used in official documents). However, in Chad for example, the government knows full well that it is Kalam Arabic which remains the most spoken language on a daily basis, whether in the offices of public administration or in the markets – not French or literary Arabic.

Kalam Arabic cements regional cohesion and harmony in the eyes of its speakers, who are estimated at over nine million Chadians, 800,000 people in northern Cameroon, and fewer than 450,000 people in north-eastern Nigeria.<sup>4</sup> The British and French colonisers were driven to marginalise Kalam Arabic in favour of Hausa for fear of Pan-Arabism, and of the advantage attributed to it because it is the language of preaching in mosques (Zeltner, 1970; Adama, 2008; INSEED, 2018). However, from its geographical epicentre in the Republic of Chad, we will see that Kalam Arabic has energised intercultural communication and articulated the discourses of peace between transnational communities.

This chapter begins with a description of what Kalam Arabic is, its role and history. Next, I conduct a qualitative analysis of a series of interviews with people living in the Lake Chad region, in order to describe how and why people use Kalam Arabic. I then explore the unsuitability of using French and English by the authorities to speak to local populations to disseminate information on the

SDGs and the human rights associated with them. I then describe the parameters by which these local populations have been able to use Kalam Arabic to interpret the SDGs to match their own development priorities. Finally, I present three case studies demonstrating the decisive role of Kalam Arabic in bringing together different populations and cultures to achieve inclusive peace and justice, and I examine the implications of this for the future of the sustainable development agenda.

## Which language(s) should be used for disseminating the SDGs in the Lake Chad Basin?

As with previous development projects, at the end of 2015 the Lake Chad Basin states chose, unsurprisingly, to disseminate the SDGs to the populations in French and/or in English. These are the only two European languages in the region, and also the least spoken by the region's 70 ethnolinguistic groups,<sup>5</sup> attesting to the low rate of basic education which is under 50 per cent on average<sup>6</sup> (Magrin & Pérouse De Montclos, 2018).

We conducted research with the local populations to analyse the usefulness or otherwise of the use of French and English, as well as the role of Kalam Arabic, in the context of development.

### Field observations

The field observations came from interviews we conducted in 2016 and 2017 in N'Djamena, Bongor, Moundou (Chad); Gambaru (Nigeria); Diffa (Niger); and Kousseri, Maroua, Kenzou, Ngaoundéré, Touboro and Garoua (Cameroon). These towns and border areas of the Lake Chad Basin are places of strong ethnic and cultural mix and are marked by a growing use of Kalam Arabic.

We interviewed 59 people: 47 speaking Kalam Arabic (Arabs, Mousgoum, Kotoko, Hajaray and Bornouans), and 12 Nigerian and Nigerien Shuwa Arabs who had lost their mother tongue to Hausa, the predominant language in Borno State (Nigeria) and Diffa (Niger). They were traditional chiefs, traders, Muslim spiritual guides, businesswomen and female politicians, teachers, students, farmers, cattle herders and state officials in the civil service. A total of 37 of these interviews took place in Cameroon, 16 in Chad, four in Nigeria and two in Niger.

3. By 'intercommunity justice' I mean the combined efforts of the many different communities which consider themselves poorly represented to achieve a just and equitable access to the running of public affairs.
4. These statistics are estimates for 2017 based on the work of Julien De Pommerol (1997), according to which more than 60 per cent of Chadians are speakers of Kalam Arabic, and on the 2010 census surveys of the Logone-et-Char, Mayo-Sava, Diamaré and Bénoué administrative divisions of north Cameroon, and on the 2016 census survey in Nigeria's Borno State, home to eight per cent of Kalam Arabic speakers. The statistics for Cameroon are available at the Bureau Central des Recensements et des Etudes de Population (BUCREP – Central Bureau of the Census and Population Studies) in Yaoundé, and for Nigeria at the National Population Commission (NPC) in Abuja.
5. See [www.cblt.org/fr/population](http://www.cblt.org/fr/population)
6. Magrin and Pérouse De Montclos (2018) cite official primary school enrolment ratios of 47 per cent in 2010 in Cameroon's Far North Region, 47.7 per cent in 2013 in Nigeria's Nord-Eastern State, 45 per cent in Chad's Lac and Hadjer Lamis regions and 57 per cent in Niger's Diffa region.

## Discussion: The limits of the usefulness of official languages

It appears that Kalam Arabic as a lingua franca is above all relevant in political (integrationist, nationalist) and educational (environmentalist, feminist and humanitarian) contexts. A detailed analysis of the data collected shows that communities attached to their cultures and traditions express themselves first in their mother tongues, then in the vernacular languages and only then in European languages, when they have to communicate with government officials. Consequently, French and English are relegated to a low level of use around Lake Chad.

The usefulness of the SDGs, despite being explained in French and English, has nevertheless enabled states, and educated people, to integrate the sense of planning for progress. By ratifying the 17 SDGs, they have brought together pluralistic ethnic differences around harmonised ideals, some of which are already achieved within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The question here is not to dwell on the success of the SDGs in French and English, but rather to analyse the limits of this, which, in the Lake Chad Basin, means a consideration of local languages (interview in Gambaru on 18 April 2017).

To inform the population about the SDGs, the authorities sent agents and officials to the countryside and villages to raise awareness – in English and French – among the people about their rights. Thus, the authorities simply transmitted the SDGs using the languages of the United Nations, rather than the languages of the local populations. Such agents employ the official languages of their countries and leave it to (often improvised) translators and interpreters to transmit the content of their message. This one-way communication risks the recipients' misunderstanding of the setting out and explanation of the SDGs. This situation raises a general question about the limits of using official languages.

## Loss of influence of French and English among populations

From colonial times until the 1980s, the peoples of the Lake Chad Basin gave a lot of credibility to authority; this was thanks to the work of African interpreters, who served as intermediaries for the authorities in remote areas, in keeping them informed. However, the corruption and tribalism that tainted democratic debates have led to the population's total rejection of the state and especially the loss of enthusiasm for learning French and English. These two languages now tend to be perceived as reflecting the allegiance of African officials to the Western world (Obotela Rashidi, 2005).

The real need for language reform therefore became a priority (Tatadjeu & Mba, 1996; Chadian Ministry of National Education, 1996). As early as 1981, Nigeria encouraged its citizens to speak one of the three main vernacular languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, in addition to English (Olagbaju & Akinsowon, 2014). Chad and Cameroon in turn reacted by including Kalam Arabic and Pulaar respectively in their educational agendas (Cameroonian Ministry of National Education, 1995).

## A local linguistic infrastructure to counter international languages and discourse

These institutional changes were not accompanied by decisive steps on the ground, however. Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, American-European discourse about progress through Western education was dominant. The themes of education for girls, respect for democratic principles and transparency in the management of petroleum resources took over the public sphere. A media campaign was launched, in English and French once again, thereby excluding the illiterate rural majority, who struggled to understand the development indicators.

Citizenship education programmes in schools were designed to fit in this new context. Students were introduced to a new vision of development which was taught in the primary and secondary cycles, and which obscured the education based on African customs to which their parents are attached in the home.

This conception of socio-educational progress was part of the linguistic model of development called the DSL model (development source language),<sup>7</sup> which Abolou (2008) defines as:

*A model that consists in introducing imported languages (French, English, Spanish, etc.) into the development process. These languages channel universal knowledge, global knowledge, and even developmental praxes. Consequently, the local populations have to adopt it in order to access modernity. In the process of communication for development, development projects are usually developed and disseminated in DSL.*

**Abolou (2008: p. 26)**

To deal with this clash between the two cultures, communities had to reassess their view of Western indicators for growth in Africa; and for this, they used local languages.

7. As developed by linguists such as Bambose (1991), Silué (2000) and Tourneux (2008, 2007), in addition to the development target language (DTL) model and the DSL/DTL interface.

To give an example, the Shuwa Arabs and the Mousgoum of Cameroon resorted to Kalam Arabic to implement democratic principles and thus succeed in countering the domination of the Kotoko. According to a traditional chief (interview in Kouroussi on 21 April 2017), the Kotoko hold a dominant position resulting from their mastery of the French language. First, the Shuwa Arabs, followed by the Mousgoum who were also excluded from the governance of local communities in the Logone-et-Chari region, organised their fight from village to village around the slogan *douwasse be kotoko* (fight for freedom against the Kotoko) in order to gain access to *alhouriye* (freedom) (Socpa, 1999; interview in Kouroussi on 21 April 2017). The first multi-party elections of the 1990s were conducted freely and they finally acceded to the offices of member of parliament and mayor which were formerly vested in the Kotoko. The almost exclusive use of Kalam Arabic in the public place, to the detriment of French, was so popular that, according to a well-known local politician, when President Paul Biya conducted a working visit to Kouroussi in 1997, his speech and meetings had to be translated into Kalam Arabic for the very first time in north Cameroon (interview in Garoua on 8 April 2017).

### Ownership of the MDGs and SDGs by Kalam Arabic speakers

To investigate the dissemination of the SDGs among users of Kalam Arabic, a brief assessment of their access to the MDGs is essential and raises the question of the efforts made by the states of the region. Indeed, while the 2030 Agenda was designed to address the concerns of Western countries, the people of the Lake Chad Basin had to make use of local languages to formulate their own priorities.

Speakers of Kalam Arabic first found out about the MDGs through awareness-raising initiatives launched in Chad, as well as in north Cameroon, on radio broadcasts (Dja FM, CRTV Extrême-Nord, Kouroussi FM and FM Bénoué among others). As loyal listeners, they quickly assimilated the MDGs. These radio stations, most often broadcasting in Kalam Arabic, played a crucial role in reconciling the plan for the implementation of the SDGs as outlined by the states and approaching the populations themselves.

For the Kalam Arabic-speaking peoples, it is the crucial question of environmental degradation that gives them access to the sense of the MDGs and the SDGs. There is indeed an interdependence between their basic needs (agro-pastoral resources, medical care, rainfall, etc.) and the habitat of the Lake Chad region. There is a permanent emphasis on fighting against pandemics, the environment, fighting against poverty and hunger,

primary education for all, improving maternal health and women's empowerment. Faced with the drying up of Lake Chad, the speakers of Kalam Arabic see their cereal harvest decreasing ever more, thus contributing to malnutrition, the dropping out of poor cattle-herder children from education, and women's shift from small trade to flood recession agriculture.

This list summarises the real objectives that these populations have set for themselves and which converge towards the eight MDGs.<sup>8</sup> It indicates to what extent native speakers (Arabs and Shuwa Arabs) and external users (Kotoko, Mousgoum, Boulala, Baguirmi, Hajaray, etc.) of Kalam Arabic have managed to match their daily priorities to the United Nations agenda.

To achieve these priorities in their environment, these populations adopted a vocabulary specific to the MDGs. These are very evocative expressions: *sihhat al am* (improving maternal health), *adawa al marad al hawan* (combatting HIV/AIDS), *al mouqoubiye* (malaria), *lokone* (primary education for all), *al maskana be djou* (poverty and hunger), *gadhi cheddar* (destruction of trees) and *rahhat al awine* (women's empowerment). From this local ownership of the terminology of development, we observe:

- a local response appropriate to the humanitarian emergency needs of speakers of Kalam Arabic
- Kalam Arabic as a tool for circumventing the linguistic and conceptual dictatorship of French and English
- logistical support for state communication promoting the MDGs.

Kalam Arabic later served to transmit the SDGs to this large segment of the population of the Lake Chad region. In 2015, as the region sank into the horror of the terrorism of Boko Haram and the chaos in Libya, the population found itself having to follow the new lexicon of the new goals. However, some SDGs did coincide with the changes being felt in the Lake Chad region caused by the continual shrinking of the lake on the one hand, and by the political awakening of the vulnerable sections of the population on the other. Once again, the language factor was to play a crucial role.

Thanks to the vitality of Kalam Arabic, its speakers were able to define both the issues and the aim of the plan set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Other than SDG 14, which focuses on the 'oceans, seas and marine resources' (United Nations, 2015) and is therefore inappropriate to their cultures, the millions of Chadian, Cameroonian and Nigerian speakers of Kalam Arabic recognised themselves well in the remaining 16 SDGs and renamed them in their own language (Table 1).

8. The MDGs were: 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2: Achieve universal primary education; 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; 4: Reduce child poverty; 5: Improve mental health; 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; and 8: Global partnership for development.

**Table 1:** The Sustainable Development Goals in Kalam Arabic (in the Lake Chad Basin)

The SDGs in English	The SDGs in Kalam Arabic	Literal translation into English from Kalam Arabic
SDG 1: No poverty	<i>al maffawaga</i>	Moral and material tranquillity
SDG 2: Zero hunger	<i>al akil</i>	Food
SDG 3: Good health and well-being	<i>assiha wa rahhat</i>	Health and ease
SDG 4: Quality education	<i>guirrah nahdidé</i>	Quality education
SDG 5: Gender equality	<i>rahhat lé radjil wal mar'a</i>	Complementarity between man and woman
SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation	<i>almé wa rissé</i>	Water and good personal hygiene <sup>9</sup>
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy	<i>nahr sabté wa rakhissé</i>	Stable and more affordable electricity
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth	<i>chaqala wa ras maliyé</i>	Sustainable jobs and incomes
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure	<i>makanat wa chey djadit</i>	Mechanisation and innovation
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities	<i>zouloum nagsate</i>	Less injustice
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities	<i>bounna wa fikr bel qabbayil</i>	Quality plots of land and intercommunity consultations
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production	<i>lagga wa akil li Allah</i>	Lawful gain and consumption
SDG 13: Climate action	<i>nizam lé djaw annaguisse</i>	Measures regarding climate degradation
SDG 14: Life below water	N/A	N/A
SDG 15: Life on land	<i>al hayaa fil ardiyé</i>	Life on the land
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	<i>al afé, achariyé wa hakouma gawiyé</i>	Peace, justice and efficient governments
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals	<i>madakhalla lé addad al ttwr</i>	Interactions towards progress

9. According to the customs of the populations who speak Kalam Arabic, 'sanitation' primarily concerns personal hygiene in their environment, i.e. villages and towns, wells, ponds and watercourses.

It is important to recognise the influence of the Muslim faith in this terminology: first, Islam constitutes the central core around which human goodness (SDG 10) and collective responsibility (SDGs 11 and 12) are prescribed – values conveyed locally in the above reformulations – because submission to Allah requires the faithful to be helpful, patient and pious. Second, in the face of social challenges (SDGs 4 and 16), Kalam Arabic represents a call for unity and improvement, as it is recognised as the language of the preaching of Islam.

Like French and English, Kalam Arabic contains a series of messages imbued with morality, ambition, idealism and utopia. However, to better understand the usefulness of Kalam Arabic for achieving the SDGs, we will now refer to current events in the Lake Chad region – dominated by socio-political demands for effective justice on the one hand and by events bringing lasting peace on the other – corresponding to SDG 16.

### SDG 16: Peace, justice and the role of Kalam Arabic – three case studies

Encouraging the participation of all in the construction of inclusive justice and in the search for lasting peace is an ambition for speakers of Kalam Arabic, and our interviews indicate that Kalam Arabic, as the local vernacular Arabic, has become a channel through which to access republican justice.

When asked ‘do your grievances/rights eventually become recognised by the state and local elected officials?’, no fewer than eight interviewees from different social strata and regions (four Cameroonian farmers and breeders from Logone-et-Char, three Chadian Arabs and Hajar traders and an ex-mayor of N’Djamena) told us that social demands expressed in Kalam Arabic – as embodied by the *IYINA* movement – will henceforth serve as the basis for collective complaints against the abuses of a privileged minority. This ambition is driven by the organisational skills of the young people involved in *IYINA* and the way they structure their meetings with rural populations. This phenomenon is in line with popular aspirations reconciling the *achriyé* (customary justice) and *qanun al hakouma* (the norms of the state).

In addition to the case of *IYINA* (case study 1, below), we note examples of intercommunity and inter-state gatherings which act as catalysts for social harmony (case studies 2 and 3).

In all three case studies, Kalam Arabic is used to make the argument, merge multi-ethnic energies and, finally, get the message across to both the rulers and the affected families.

### Case study 1: The *IYINA* movement

The *IYINA* movement (‘*iyina*’ means ‘enough is enough; we are sick and tired’) in Chad is a particular example in which the accent is put on language choice to allow the population to take part in the debates about republican justice.

Unlike the Arab-Mousgoum protest (1985–97), the *IYINA* movement stemmed from the frustrations of young people across an entire country who resolved to fight the injustice of the system of governance. The control of the Deby Itno regime over Chad’s oil revenues since 2004 was at the origin of the creation of *IYINA* in December 2015. The use of Kalam Arabic in these gatherings gave particular resonance to the denunciation of great scourges such as *rachoua* (corruption) and *hougra* (contempt), which together constituted *zulum katarate* (innumerable injustices), thus inspiring the choice of the word ‘*iyina*’.

The sense of ‘we are tired, we are fed up’ ascribed to this concept in various activists’ communications is a vector for the ideal of intercommunity justice to which *IYINA*’s approximately 63,000 young members are committed. The leaders of the movement carry out repeated debates in meeting places, lead the protests and provide mass training in leadership skills on a dedicated Facebook page and on their website.<sup>10</sup> Tired of suffering the contempt of the ruling Zaghawa elite, the cost of living and the longevity of the Deby Itno regime, it is precisely because the leaders of the movement used Kalam Arabic to convince them to fight that these young people joined *IYINA*, according to one of the leaders (interview on 15 October 2017).

In contrast to the use of French in the international media, the use of Kalam Arabic helped to draw up a list of injustices effectively, and create a set of demands. This movement augured a social dynamism imbued with democratic debates, and the Zaghawa regime, formerly inflexible, ended up giving some credit to it (interview with a businesswoman in N’Djamena on 23 April 2017).

It is in this sense that we must appreciate the *Harare Declaration* (1997) and, in another register, the *Asmara Declaration* (2000), which call for dialogue with the peoples of the continent through optimal official use of African languages, and proclaim the vitality of these African languages for the development of democracy based on equality and social justice (Musau, 2003; Obotela Rashidi, 2005).

10. Facebook page: Mouvement citoyen *IYINA* – MCI du Tchad. Website: [www.iyina.org](http://www.iyina.org)

## Case study 2: *Istiffaguiye* (harmony) through *kalawa* (death rituals)

*Kalawa* (or *tasiya*) refers to the Muslim ceremonial practices which accompany a person's death in the Lake Chad region. To understand the fundamental role of language in the *kalawa*, it is necessary to go beyond the *doua* (invocations) alone.

Apart from the information transmitted in the immediate neighbourhood of the deceased, the media play an important role in the announcements of deaths, in particular the Chadian National Radio, Dja FM and Kousseri FM, broadcasting in Kalam Arabic with a very large regional reach. The notion *al balaq mwadji leh* ... (news of the death of this person ...) naturally predisposes the listeners to travel beyond national borders to come and bring assistance (*karbin al iyd*) to the affected families. The condolences addressed affect the relatives and friends all the more since the Arabic language which is used is known for its vast lexicon of peace which fully reproduces Quranic invocations relating to the obituary.

It is in these similarities between the lexicon for Islamic obituary and the Kalam Arabic used at funerals that we detect an important complementarity between Kalam Arabic and Classical Arabic, used in the Quran. According to Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh,<sup>11</sup> as Kalam Arabic allows learners of the Quran to decode the surahs (chapters) easily, Kalam Arabic is closer to the Classical Arabic consecrated in the Holy Book (Saleh, 1976; interview in Maroua on 13 December 2016). For example, during funerals the following expressions of good wishes in Kalam Arabic are often heard in Muslim communities throughout the Lake Chad region: '*Allah yakfirla wa yarhama be Djanat*' ('may Allah forgive and grant him paradise!') and '*al motte gassi illé sabbour*' ('losing a being is difficult, be strong!'). As recorded in the Quran, these statements convey messages of peace, compassion and openness that lead to *istiffaguiye* (harmony), regardless of ethnicity and nationality. This is a good illustration of the rationale for the 2005 UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Chandrasenan, 2015).

The same phenomenon can be found in the celebration of marriages in the countries around the Lake Chad Basin, which we will now examine in our third case study. By ultimately officiating as a language for the practice of Islam and intercultural communion alongside Hausa and Pulaar, Kalam Arabic succeeds in breaking down ethnolinguistic constraints in the Lake Chad region.

## Case study 3: *Istiffaguiye* through *arrayiss* (weddings)

*Arrayiss* (wedding) celebrations in Nigeria's Borno State, Cameroon and Chad are enriched by the use of Kalam Arabic. Despite a multitude of wedding traditions in the region, populations hold a high esteem for matrimonial groupings which combine displays of wealth, prestigious clothing and concerts by famous artists who touch people's hearts with their wishes for tolerance and love, which they convey in Kalam Arabic.

This spectacle originated among the Chadian Arabs and those of N'Djamena in particular, but has spread throughout the region to such an extent that the populations as a whole simply link it to the Arab culture of the Lake Chad region in general. However, lyrics such as '*mabrouk lel arousse*' ('congratulations to the newlyweds!') or '*mal wa iyal*' ('may Allah grant them good offspring and fortune!'), which Sudanese and/or Chadian stars (such as Mohammed Al Wardi and Faraj Al Halawani) proclaim from behind their microphones, confer emotions, fraternity and solidarity between the guests. The communities who have been invited enjoy a strong feeling of affiliation to one same family, united by Kalam Arabic. It is this feeling which establishes a harmony between these communities, consolidated by other marriage bonds which are woven later and very often go beyond a mono-ethnic setting into an intercommunity framework.

Let us note the particular case of (mainly Christian) South Sudan where the linguistic Arabisation of non-Arab ethnic groups through the use of Juba Arabic (a creolised variety of Kalam Arabic) encouraged intercommunal and interdenominational communication before independence was declared on 9 July 2011. The use of Kalam Arabic by musicians both in (Muslim) Sudan and in (Christian) South Sudan conveyed a strong feeling of belonging to one same family united by Juba Arabic to the non-Arab (but Juba Arabic-speaking) ethnic groups. However, even under the effect of exogamic marriages with the Arab populations, the separation of the (mainly Christian) South Sudanese people from the (Arab-Muslim) Republic of Sudan in the north led to the subsequent promotion of the Dinka-Nuer languages there, which today threatens the predominance of Juba Arabic (Miller, 1986; Eberhard et al., 2020).

Through these three case studies, it seems clear that Kalam Arabic mobilises the diverse and cross-border peoples of the Lake Chad region to search for inclusive justice and lasting peace, and that marriages and funerals play a particularly important role.

11. Saleh is a Nigerian, Kalam Arabic-speaking university professor and influential spiritual guide of the Tijāniyyah order, which has a great following in Maiduguri in Nigeria's Borno State, in Chad, in Cameroon's Far North and in North Africa.

## Conclusion

Kalam Arabic, as Owens (2000) maintains, is the ancient variety of Arabic which, thanks to its ethnolinguistic vitality in Chad, north Cameroon and north-east Nigeria and in the Diffa region, has survived in the face of Hausa and Pulaar. The cohabitation of these languages is in conflict from the Islamic point of view: three lingua francas, each working tirelessly to outshine the other two and claim the status of being the predominant mode of diffusion of Islam in the Lake Chad Basin (Hessana, 2015).<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, teaching literary Arabic in schools and universities does not seem to be an effective strategy given the limited opportunities available to students who specialise in it.

More so than its value in the knowledge of Islam, it is the value of Kalam Arabic in social struggles and intercommunity harmony that should make the Lake Chad Basin states reflect on what Biyogo<sup>13</sup> calls the 'endogenisation' of development planning. We can already see that Kalam Arabic speakers are aware of the fact that this language has been adopted by communities and reconciles the Muslim cultures of the Lake Chad Basin, from which it has borrowed words, expressions, a philosophy – and to which it has lent some, too.

As a result of having built a social status (as the language for preaching and for trade), a demographic base (more than ten million speakers) and institutional support (official recognition as a national language in Chad and Sudan), Kalam Arabic is often perceived as a Nilo-Sudanic language, particularly by speakers of Pulaar, although it is actually Semitic. Indeed, the social sciences often conceive of the dispersed tribes of native Kalam Arabic speakers as a single ethnic group, just as they do the neighbouring black communities. In reality, Kalam Arabic is an intercultural communication channel that has enabled its speakers to embrace the SDGs across borders. It is therefore a tool for development.

The building of just, peaceful and inclusive societies as described by SDG 16 is real among speakers of Kalam Arabic united within the *IYINA* movement and during *kalawa* and *arrayiss*. In this chapter, we have shown that Kalam Arabic has the capacity to promote integration and intercommunity justice, a quality which literary Arabic does not possess in these kinds of intercultural groupings in the Lake Chad region.

At a time when borders within the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, and even of the African Union, are being opened up, local languages must be able to claim their place in the planning of growth and development, which is still today dictated by the colonial languages.

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## 17. Literacy for inclusion in the South West Indian Ocean: French-based Creole as site of struggle in the Republic of Mauritius and French Reunion Island

Jimmy Harmon

### Abstract

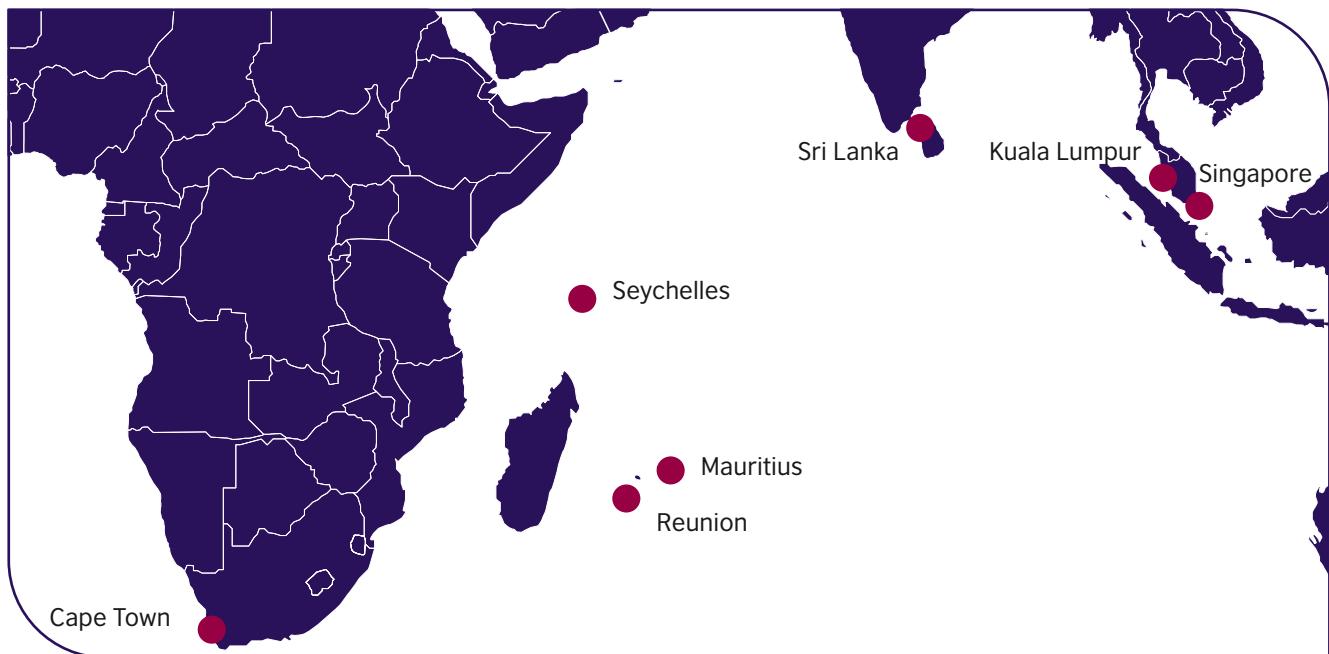
This is a comparative study of local language literacy issues in two countries of the South West Indian Ocean, namely Mauritius and French Reunion Island. Both countries have French-based Creole as the vernacular and are commonly called *Îles-Sœur* (Sister Islands) as they are 140 miles away from each other. In fact, they have a shared history of French colonisation and slavery, but both experienced different processes of decolonisation. In 1968, Mauritius achieved independence after successive centuries of French and British colonisation and in 1992 became a republic. In 1946 Reunion Island, like other former French colonies, was ascribed the same political status as administrative divisions in mainland France. Recent developments in Mauritius have seen the introduction of Creole as an optional language subject in primary schools since 2012. In Reunion Island, Creole has the status of a regional language within France. My study is underpinned by both etic (insider's) and emic (observer's) perspectives. As an engaged researcher, I have been actively involved in the socio-historical processes leading to the introduction of Mauritian Creole as an optional language in schools. I am of the view that French-based Creole in Mauritius and Reunion Island is a site of struggle for accessing resources, empowering language minorities, participating in development, and democratic processes.

### Introduction

This chapter examines the role of (French-based) Creole in two countries, namely Mauritian Creole (Kreol Morisien) and Reunion Creole (Créole Réunionnais) in the Republic of Mauritius and the French *département* (administrative division) of Reunion Island respectively. Kreol Morisien has been studied as an optional language subject in primary and secondary schools since 2012, while Crédole Réunionnais has had the same status in education as other regional languages within France and its overseas departments since its recognition under French law in 2001.

In this chapter I discuss how Creole language, in spite of its official recognition, remains a site of struggle for quality education, identity and inclusion in both the State of Mauritius and France. I describe the context of both countries with regard to language and development and forms of literacy advocacy. I then examine the central theme of my discussion, i.e. Creole as a site of struggle. I go on to engage with the proceedings of past Language and Development Conferences before discussing how, in postcolonial societies like Mauritius and Reunion, a mother tongue-based literacy alongside multilingualism poses challenges to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning and SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

**Figure 1:** Map showing the proximity of Mauritius and Reunion Island and their geo-strategic position in the wider region



## The context

### Demographics and education

The Republic of Mauritius (area: 790 square miles) and the French *département* of Reunion Island (area: 970 square miles) form part of the South West Indian Ocean island states (see Figure 1). Both countries have (French-based) Creole as the vernacular. While the word 'Creole' in Reunion Island designates mainly the person and the language, it also refers to one of the biggest ethnic minority groups in Mauritius. In the 1972 census (the last time identification by community<sup>1</sup> was included in the survey), Mauritius comprised 51 per cent of people classified as being of Indian (mostly Hindu) origin. The biggest minority were Creoles (27 per cent), followed by Muslims (17 per cent), Chinese (three per cent) and whites (two per cent) (Mauritius Ministry of Economic Planning and Development Central Statistical Office, 1972).

Reunion Island and Mauritius are commonly called *Îles-Sœur* (Sister Islands) as they are 140 miles away from each other. Indeed, they have a shared history of French colonisation and slavery but experienced different processes of decolonisation. In 1968, Mauritius achieved

independence after successive periods of Dutch (1638–58; 1664–1710), French (1710–1810) and British (1810–1968) colonisation and, in 1992, became a republic. Since it was given the *département* designation in 1946,<sup>2</sup> Reunion Island is one of 12 overseas territories of France having the same status as those on the mainland. Its current population is 883,247, while Mauritius stands at 1,263,820 inhabitants (Statistics Mauritius, 2017). Out of 188 countries, Mauritius and Reunion Island (as part of France) stand at 66th and 26th on the Human Development Index respectively (UNDP, 2019), which puts both countries in the 'high development' category. Today, Mauritius has achieved universal access to primary education and gender parity in enrolment (UNESCO, 2015). As of 2015, most of the United Nations Education for All targets were met. The adult literacy rate for both sexes in Mauritius was estimated at 89.8 per cent in the 2011 census (Statistics Mauritius, 2012).

However, educational outcomes are relatively poor in both Mauritius and Reunion Island. In the case of Mauritius, over 50 per cent of pupils starting primary education do not go on to complete the Cambridge School Certificate (taken at the fifth year of secondary schooling)<sup>3</sup> and fewer than 25 per cent pass the Cambridge Higher School Certificate (at the seventh

1. The First Schedule (Section 31(2)) of the Constitution (1965) of the Republic of Mauritius refers to four community groups: 'For the purposes of this Schedule, the population of Mauritius shall be regarded as including a Hindu community, a Muslim community, and a Sino-Mauritian community; and every person who does not appear, from his way of life, to belong to one or other of those three communities shall be regarded as belonging to the General Population, which shall be regarded as the fourth community' (Paragraph 4). Creoles are included in the General Population category.
2. The 1946 *loi de départementalisation* (departmentalisation law) converted the status of the colonies of Reunion Island, Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana to that of French *département*.
3. See <https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/working-with-governments/our-experience/mauritius/>

year of secondary).<sup>4</sup> Research literature (Daleau-Gauvin, 2014; Georger, 2006; Hummel, 2009) indicates that out of 820,000 inhabitants of Reunion Island, 110,000 are illiterate – 13 per cent of the total population, and that Reunion Island students fall behind by an average of ten per cent annually in their progression in French and maths as compared to students in mainland France.

This inefficiency in the education system, leading consequently to a waste of human resources, has long been blamed on the absence of a mother tongue literacy policy by local researchers and mother tongue advocates (Harmon, 2017; Hummel, 2009; Georger, 2005). In the next section I provide a brief historical overview of the struggle of the Creole language up until today. This look at the history of the issue will help us understand the wider discussion on language as a site of struggle.

### Literacy advocacy

At a global level, the importance of mother tongue literacy has been acknowledged since specialists convened in Paris in 1951 on the use of vernacular languages in education. As a result of this meeting UNESCO states:

*We take it as axiomatic that every child of school age should attend school and every illiterate child should be made literate. We take it as axiomatic, too, that the best medium of teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil.*

**UNESCO (1953: p. 6)**

The above statement has always underpinned the struggle for recognition of Creole as a fully-fledged language and not as a 'broken French' or 'patois', which should be used as medium of instruction in education.

### The struggle for Kreol Morisien in Mauritius

In Mauritius, this struggle can be dated back to when it became independent in the late 1960s, originating with the contemporary Mauritian author, poet and linguist Dev Virahsawmy, who at that time came back to his country after graduating in linguistics at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. His dissertation, *Towards a reevaluation of the Mauritian Creole*, described Kreol Morisien and the role of this language in nation-building and economic development.<sup>5</sup> One week after the 1967 general election which gave victory to the Alliance Party of Independence, he published a paper on Kreol Morisien entitled *Language problems in Mauritius* in the daily newspaper *L'Express* on 12 August 1967. In this press article, he explained the importance of eradicating illiteracy and the need for language planning, and made a plea for using Kreol Morisien as the medium of instruction in primary education at the initial stage, followed by English as soon as the children had acquired the rudiments of learning (Virahsawmy, 1967).

Subsequently, the struggle for recognition of Kreol Morisien went through different phases. We can broadly identify a left-wing militant period (1970–80), a period focused on literacy and citizenship (1990s to 2000), an educational period with particular concern for high drop-out rates among adolescents (2001–08), and a political and pedagogical period (2008–10).

This last period was marked by strong demands from particular ethnic groups, and this led to the introduction of Kreol Morisien as an optional language subject in primary schools in 2012. Opinion leaders and Creole organisations formed by the Creole minority population claimed Kreol Morisien as their ancestral language and demanded that it be introduced in school on an equal basis with Asian languages and Arabic, which have been studied at primary level since the era of British colonisation and are strong identity markers of the Indo-Mauritian community: in 1941, following the report of WEF Ward, the director of education during British rule, attempts to remove Asian languages were met with strong opposition by the Indo-Mauritian leaders and became one of the key elements in the struggle for Mauritian independence.

### The struggle for Créole Réunionnais in Reunion Island

In Reunion Island, it was the scholarly work of the French academic Robert Chaudenson, *Le lexique du parler créole à la Réunion* (1974), which first aroused interest in Créole Réunionnais and other French-based Creoles. Chaudenson's publication gives a synchronic and diachronic description of Créole Réunionnais so as to develop a hypothesis about the origin and genesis of the language. This publication inspired further research in Créole Réunionnais and gave birth to other seminal works by other French academics such as Pierre Cellier (1985) and Michel Carayol et al. (1984–95). In the wake of this research, the struggle for recognition of the Creole language became one of the main features of cultural affirmation in the 'autonomiste' debate of the 1970s and 1980s on the status of Reunion Island as a French department (Gauvin, 2002).

However, it was the work of the Reunion-born cultural militant and Creole writer Axel Gauvin, *Du créole opprimé au créole libéré* (1977) – *From oppressed Creole to liberated Creole* – which raised the issue of mother tongue literacy for inclusion. Two years earlier in 1975, Gauvin and some friends within ARCA (Association réunionnaise de cours pour adultes – Reunion Association of Adult Classes) had begun providing literacy courses for adults in French. Gradually, they realised from this work in the field that literacy must start in Creole first, and move on to French second. Drawing from this literacy campaign experience, Gauvin's ensuing publication posits that for

4. *Ibid.*

5. Virahsawmy, D (1967) Towards a re-evaluation of Mauritian Creole. Unpublished master's dissertation. University of Edinburgh.

an autonomous Reunion Island to exist within France, it is essential to develop Creole–French bilingualism (Gauvin, 1977). Since 2001, Créole Réunionnais has had the status of regional language and is recognised as a *Langue et Culture Régionale* (Language and Regional Culture) of France under French law.<sup>6</sup>

## Creole as site of struggle

The different situations of Creole language in Mauritius and the French *département* of Reunion Island show the extent to which mother tongue, or vernacular, literacy is a site of sociological struggle, too.

I use the word ‘site’ here in line with the metaphor of ‘field’ elaborated by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) as a sociological construct. In *Ce que parler veut dire* (1982) and *Language and symbolic power* (1991), Bourdieu argues that language is not an autonomous unit in the Saussurian perspective on language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*), but it is instituted by social forces in the ‘field’. In other words, the status of a language is best illustrated as being in the field: a space of struggle in which activity is structured and boundaries controlled. It is a social system that functions according to its own specific logic or rules which Bourdieu calls ‘habitus’: the internalised set of tacit rules governing strategies and tactics in the field (Bourdieu, 1982). Unspoken rules, values and norms are established and legitimacy invested in agents (individuals or institutions) implicitly recognised as powerful possessors of symbolic capital relevant for the specific field under examination.

## Kreol Morisien: Redressing the ethnic balance

In Mauritius, the ethnic dimension and the status of Kreol Morisien are inextricably linked due to the position of the minority Creole group. Although Kreol Morisien is spoken by all Mauritians, its status is linked to that of the Creoles whose history and social status are associated with slavery, marginalisation and social immobility. Introducing Kreol Morisien on the same basis as Asian and Arabic languages was tantamount to giving the Creoles equal access to the symbolic resources that Asian and Arabic languages represent for the Indo-Mauritian community. Patrick Eisenlohr, Assistant Professor in Anthropology, Washington University, in his book *Little India* (2007) depicts the situation in Mauritius before Kreol Morisien was introduced:

*The crucial point is that [...] the Creoles do not have recognised claims on an ancestral language and ancestral culture. This is because the institutionalised ideology of ancestral languages suggests that for a language and cultural tradition to count as ancestral,*

*it has to be linked to a putative place of origin outside Mauritius. Therefore, in contrast to Indo-Mauritians, Creoles have little access to the state-supported ancestral language apparatus in the educational system. The system of political patronage and lobbying, which the ancestral language sector provides in Mauritius, is hardly available to Creoles either.*

**Eisenlohr (2007: p. 200)**

In 2012, when the State of Mauritius went ahead with the introduction of Kreol Morisien as an optional language on a par with oriental and Asian languages and Arabic for the first time, it was a means for the state to redress the balance back towards the Creole population with regard to the system of political patronage and lobbying. The latest statistical data gives some indication of how the introduction of Kreol Morisien led to a new allocation of resources and the resultant outcomes today.

- Of primary pupils entering Grade 1, 21.2 per cent take Kreol Morisien, while 36.2 per cent take Hindi, far ahead of Urdu (eight per cent), Arabic (7.3 per cent), Tamil (4.8 per cent), Telegu (1.5 per cent), Marathi (1.3 per cent) and Modern Chinese (4.3 per cent) (Statistics Mauritius, 2017).
- The total number of teachers at all levels stands at 173 for Kreol Morisien and 487 for Hindi (Statistics Mauritius, 2017).
- In 2016, of 17,099 pupils sitting the end of primary school examination after six years, 13,160 (76.96 per cent) passed successfully (Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, 2017). A new mode of examination was introduced in 2018 known as the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC), with a similar pass rate of 73.86 per cent in 2019 (Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, 2019).
- With a pass rate of 79.60 per cent, the performance in Kreol Morisien tops the list of optional languages and is even better than Hindi, which stands at 73.53 per cent (Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, 2017).
- As of 2017, Kreol Morisien has also been offered as an optional subject in secondary schools.

It is clear that the long struggle for the recognition of Kreol Morisien has been successful. Despite this success, however, the unresolved issue of Kreol Morisien as medium of instruction is as relevant as ever. The majority of the Mauritian children whose mother tongue is Kreol Morisien are left behind, as English remains the official medium of instruction for mathematics and the sciences. Therefore, Kreol Morisien remains on the agenda of the struggle for mother tongue literacy in Mauritius.

6. Bulletin Officiel de l'Education Nationale, No. 33 (Official bulletin, National Education, number 33), 13 September 2001.

There are similarities here with Cr  ole R  unionnais, which I describe in the following part of this chapter – although it has not made the same strides as Kreol Morisien.

### Cr  ole R  unionnais: Establishing a new rapport with French

In 1999, France signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, but it has still not ratified it (Council of Europe, 1992). In 2015, France's Conseil d'Etat (Council of State, the body acting as the supreme court for matters of administrative law) gave an unfavourable opinion of the charter and pointed out the danger of the break-up of France 'one and indivisible'<sup>7</sup> into balkanisation and ethnic separatism if the charter were to be implemented. However, since the French authorities issued Article L 312-10 in 2001, education regulations have made room for regional and minority languages, including Creole:

*L'enseignement des langues et cultures r  gionales favorise la continuit   entre l'environnement familial et social et le syst  me   ducatif, contribuant    l'int  gration de chacun dans le tissu social de proximit  . Cet enseignement s'applique actuellement au basque, au breton, au catalan, au corse, au cr  ole, au gallo,    l'occitan-langue d'oc, aux langues r  gionales d'Alsace, aux langues r  gionales des pays mosellans, au tahitien, ainsi qu'aux langues m  lan  siennes (drehu, nengone, paici, aije [sic]).<sup>8</sup>*

**French Ministry of Education and Research (2001)**

Despite this, Hummel (2009) points out that while 47.7 per cent of Reunion Island inhabitants are in favour of teaching the Creole language at school, 42.7 per cent are against it. Fewer than one per cent of students are studying Creole R  unionnais as a 'regional language and culture'. Cr  ole R  unionnais is not offered on the same basis as Kreol Morisien in the education system, and it is not studied as a language subject as such (Daleau-Gauvin, 2014). It is offered as a 'first exposure' to the Creole culture at pre-primary level, then is taken into account in the teaching of French language in pedagogical programmes such as French as a second language (*Fran  ais langue seconde*), French as a foreign language (*Fran  ais langue   trang  re*) or French in a Creolophone context (*Apprentissage du fran  ais en milieu cr  olophone*). Furthermore, no standardised orthography and written form has yet been adopted for Cr  ole R  unionnais (the most common form is what is called

the 'Tangol', named after an organisation created in 2001 and led by Axel Gauvin – many of the published works in the Creole language have been written in 'Tangol').

The main struggle of Creolists in the French overseas *d  partements* of the Caribbean (Martinique, Guadeloupe) and Indian Ocean (Reunion Island) is to challenge the cultural demeaning (*minoration culturelle*) of the Creole language as compared to French (Georger, 2002). Indeed, until the introduction of the *Langues et cultures r  gionales* education regulations, criticisms were levelled at the education system for not granting equal consideration and dignity to Creole in comparison to French. For the Creolists, however, there should not be any competition with French but rather both languages are reciprocally enriching and should be promoted. In their 2006 publication *Oui au fran  ais, oui au cr  ole* (Yes to French, yes to Creole), Daleau et al. clarify their position on French in the following terms:

*Si nous sommes pour le cr  ole, c'est aussi, sans aucun doute possible, pour des raisons identitaires. R  unionnais et fiers de l'  tre, nous tenons    notre identit  , et nous la d  fendons. Nous nous battons pour que notre cr  ole soit reconnu, pris en compte, valoris   – pas du bout des l  vres, pas de fa  on formelle, ni « administrative » ; mais profond  ement, dans les faits, au niveau de la soci  t   tout enti  re [...] C'est cette identit   diverse autour des noyaux cr  ole et fran  ais qu'il nous faut accepter, mieux : assumer, revendiquer, d  velopper. Cela veut dire qu'  tre pour le fran  ais    la R  union, n'est pas   tre anti-R  unionnais, bien au contraire : le fran  ais est une des langues fondatrices de la culture r  unionnaise.<sup>9</sup>*

**Daleau et al. (2006)**

In the light of the above quote, the identity question is central to the struggle for recognition of Creole language. Creolists want Creole language and culture to be recognised as their specific identity, but also claim that they are French. For them, French is one of the founding languages of the native culture of Reunion Island. The real challenge for the Creolists is to promote Creole while keeping hold of French. It is interesting to note that the main organisation promoting Creole is Lofis Lalang Kr  ol La R  enyon (Office of the Creole language of Reunion Island), created in 2006 in the wake of the *Etats G  n  raux de la Culture* (culture summit) held by the elected regional Assembly of Reunion Island (Conseil R  gional de la R  union). Lofis receives support from the

7. Article 1 of the French Constitution of 24 June 1793 (France, 1793).

8. Translation: 'The teaching of regional languages and cultures promotes continuity between family and social life and the education system, thus contributing to every child's inclusion in their immediate social fabric. This teaching is currently applicable to Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Creole, Gallo, Occitan-lenga d'oc, the regional languages of Alsace, the regional languages of Moselle, Tahitian, and the Melanesian languages (Drehu, Nengone, Paici, Aji  ). Note that the official ministerial regulation misspelled the language Aji  .'

9. Translation: 'We are also, without a shadow of a doubt, in favour of Creole for reasons of identity. We are Reunionese and proud of it, and we value our identity, and we defend it. We are fighting to have our Creole recognised, to have it taken into account, and valued – not lip service, nor 'administratively', but profoundly, and in reality, throughout the whole of society [...] This diverse identity, built around the French and Creole dual core, is the one we must accept, and more than that: take it on board; demand it; develop it. That doesn't mean being in favour of French in Reunion Island is anti-Reunionese, on the contrary: French is one of the founding languages of Reunionese culture.'

conseil. The end result is a continuing reshaping and redefinition of Creole language as defined by its relation to French and France.

By seeking recognition of the Creole language, the struggle of Kreol Morisien and Cr  ole R  unionnais is ultimately an attempt at literacy for inclusion. This gives rise to some problems instantly which I examine below. Before addressing these problems, however, I will draw from past Language and Development Conferences which provide some useful insights.

## Insights from previous Language and Development Conference proceedings

For Joseph (2014), language is often seen by people as an index of who they are and their own performance. He states that identity is taken as 'social identity', i.e. belonging to a group while one's individual identity is as important as the social one; it is at the level of the individual that people vary. The author describes this situation as 'the economy of granting and withholding' in terms of good and bad speakers of a language (Joseph, 2014: p. 26). The issue is: how do we account for the 'good' individual speaker in the elaboration of teaching materials in the school environment? Who decides who is 'good'? This was an issue in Mauritius when school textbooks were being developed, and it became especially acute on the question of the pronunciation of certain words. This may appear to be a secondary concern, as the codification and standardisation of languages imply a high degree of arbitrary decisions; but when it comes to indigenous languages or non-colonial languages which we want to codify and use in formal teaching and learning, we have to take the context into account.

For Laviña-Gumba (2011), mother tongue literacy must be a tool for the empowerment of the indigenous people and it cannot take place in a vacuum. Similarly, for Alidou and Glanz (2015: p. 57, referring to Kerfoot, 2009), the community must be 'makers and shapers' rather than 'users and choosers'. This means that the approach to literacy should be participatory. In both Mauritius and Reunion Island, such a participatory approach is not feasible as the Creole language is taught in a formal school context. The irony is that while the struggle for recognition of this language has been led at grassroots level, now that the language has got into school, it is the academics and the institutions who are the 'makers and shapers' of the language. The children of the community become mere 'users' and parents are 'choosers' by the time they send their child to school. They do not have their say in their own language. It happens that parents learn surprising new ways of pronouncing or writing certain words in Creole from their children.

In the case of Kreol Morisien in Mauritius, there are parallels to be found in Sri Lanka's situation. Perera (2011) states that 'the politics of ethnicity and language as experienced today have even been imposed on the past, thereby rendering the past itself a casualty of contemporary politics' (Perera, 2011: p. 56). After Sri Lanka's independence, the politicisation of language through Sinhalisation contributed to the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict. Similarly, ethnic politics after independence in Mauritius has led to the marginalisation of the Creole minority ethnic group, making the struggle for recognition of Kreol Morisien more difficult – and especially its use in mainstream education (Auckle, 2017). Today, this is the main obstacle for Kreol Morisien to becoming a medium of instruction, despite being the national vernacular. In this case, ethnic politics itself has become the 'contemporary casualty' in Mauritius. In my view, Batibo's 'optimal' language policy (Batibo, 2014) is the most appropriate solution for Mauritius and Reunion Island:

*A lingua franca or common national language is essential in fostering unity and a sense of identity and togetherness as a nation. This would also be the language that spearheads national development through socio-economic plans and the use of national resources. At the same time, there would be a need for a language that facilitates technological transfer, provision of foreign skills and global information flow. [...] it is clear that to have an optimal national language policy, one needs all the three types of languages, namely mother tongues (including minority languages), national languages (the nationally dominant languages, which serve as lingua francas) and the ex-colonial languages, which are recognised by the African Union as partner languages.*

Batibo (2014: p. 16)

This is, in fact, the position adopted by advocates of Creole in both Mauritius and Reunion Island who argue for mother tongue literacy alongside multilingual education. The challenge is how to ensure that this multilingualism does not instil a feeling that the former colonial languages (euphemistically called ‘international languages’) are superior to the mother tongue. This is what Bagwasi (2014) qualifies as a situation which promotes ‘hierarchical multilingualism’.

I now put forward two postulates: first, that a mother tongue-based literacy alongside multilingual education can ensure inclusion, quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (SDG 4); second, that it creates the potential to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16).

While striving towards these two goals, I consider there are two major challenges for Mauritius and Reunion Island. The first challenge is the need to develop a pedagogy of languages, based on equal dignity to both Creole and French/English – that is, achieving bilingualism and biliteracy. The second challenge is managing the ambivalent situation linked to the postcolonial legacy.

## Achieving bilingualism and biliteracy based on equal dignity

### Bilingualism

I use the working definition of inclusion by Armstrong (2003) with regard to policy, difference and the challenge of inclusive education. In this definition, inclusion is concerned with cultural change in all areas of social, personal and political life. It is seen as a process, or a set of processes, involving re-evaluation of the premises on which education systems are based. Thus, literacy for inclusion as propounded by language activists in Mauritius and Reunion Island implies a reassessment of the education system and language policy. This system already excludes more than 80 per cent of its school population at the point of exit at completion of secondary education (Virahsawmy, 2013; Harmon, 2017).

From a post-modernist perspective on African languages, Stroud (2003) argues that school is a key site for conferring legitimacy on specific language practices and for distributing control over linguistic and non-linguistic resources. Promoting the mother tongue inevitably leads to a re-evaluation of this control system, but the real challenge lies in how to accommodate the mother tongue within the system. The fact remains that for a large majority of parents and children, Creole is not the sole language in daily communication. For Hummel (2009), parents are torn between their loyalty to Cr  ole R  unionnais, which they cherish, and the necessity to give their children the opportunity to master French, which is the language of social mobility.

The antagonism between mother tongue and French or English may therefore be artificial: parents may not necessarily be giving up their language and culture, but they do want the best for their children. The language situations in Mauritius and Reunion Island clearly indicate that parents are nowadays ready to be convinced that the mother tongue is the best foundation for starting education, but, at this stage, we have not yet reached such a situation. Language and development has until now remained in the realm of academic conferences, and results are not tangible enough for changing doubtful attitudes and beliefs.

It is for this reason that current experiments in bilingual education at school level in French-Cr  ole R  unionnais and English-Kreol Morisien are challenging for inclusion. Their sustainability over the long term will be decisive in mother tongue literacy. It will also ensure the diversity of the cultural ecology. If learning can take place at a reasonable pace in both languages and eventually lead to the mastery of French and English as well, this will suffice to give reassurance to parents about the benefit of a mother tongue-based curriculum alongside multilingualism.

### Biliteracy

At the same time, bilingualism is not enough.

According to Grosjean (1989), 'bilingual' does not mean 'two monolinguals in one person'. Competencies in both languages are not acquired at the same time and to the same degree. The notion of biliteracy came into existence in the context of the teaching of English as second language in Anglo-Saxon countries and especially the United States. Niyekawa (1983: p. 98) distinguishes bilingualism from biliteracy as 'an advanced state of bilingualism where the person can not only speak two languages fluently but also read and write these two languages'. The concept of biliteracy brings in reading and writing in the mother tongue and the target language. Achieving bilingualism and biliteracy should normally be the end result of schooling (Harmon, 2017).

## Managing the ambivalent situation linked to postcolonial legacy

I use the term 'postcolonial' here to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experiences of societies that were former European colonies (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Mauritius and Reunion Island are faced with issues of citizenship which postcolonial studies consider eurocentrist concepts and not relevant to postcolonial societies (Chakrabarty, 2007). The status of Creole languages is stuck in a quagmire. Creole may not necessarily occupy the one nation, one language status. It has an ambivalent position. For instance, the identity claims of Cr  ole R  unionnais mirror the cultural positioning of the Reunionese people in relation to France. Similarly, Kreol Morisien is claimed by the Creole minority ethnic group to position itself against the dominant Indo-Mauritian state apparatus. The dominant discourse in Mauritius on citizenship views citizens as severed of all primordial ties and as homogenous before the state as 'one nation'.

Yet, it is the concept of 'community' rather than 'nation' which provides meaning in postcolonial countries like Mauritius. In the case of Reunion Island (and other identity claims in French *départements* such as Corsica), the motto of the French state for 'a united republic, one and indivisible' ('une république une et indivisible') should be countered with claims for 'a united republic, indivisible and diverse' ('une république une, indivisible et diverse'). For Kymlicka (1995, 2007), assimilationist notions of citizenship are ineffective today because of the deepening diversity throughout the world and the quests by marginalised groups for cultural recognition and rights. On the other hand, only when the national civic culture is transformed in ways that reflect and give voice to the diverse ethnic, racial, language and religious communities that constitute it, will it be viewed as legitimate by all of its citizens. This has definite implications for managing diversity to achieve a peaceful, just and inclusive society.

## Conclusion

This discussion opens new avenues for research and actions in language and development. The South West Indian Ocean has its own specificities, for two reasons: its geographical position, and the socio-historical dynamics in the Small Island States<sup>10</sup> bordering that part of the world. The case of Creole in Reunion Island and Mauritius has indicated how English or French has a direct or indirect bearing on quality education, inclusion, peace and lifelong learning. One possible research area would be a comparative study of French- and English-speaking countries of this region.

This region is of increasing geo-political interest to China and India as well as France, the UK and the US. Language is one key feature of what is being deployed by these established and emerging powers to support economic blocs in this region. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA),<sup>11</sup> for instance, regroups English-speaking countries with India and South Africa as leading partners; similarly, the Indian Ocean Commission (or La Commission de l'océan Indien, in French),<sup>12</sup> headquartered in Mauritius, has a francophone bent.

In terms of actions, support could be given to the different initiatives currently being conducted in bilingual education and biliteracy in the region. It will also be crucial to develop, sustain and link academics, researchers and practitioners working on language and development with other parts of the world.

10. See the United Nations list of Small Island Developing States: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sids/list>

11. See <https://www.iora.int/en>

12. See <https://www.commissionoceanindien.org/>

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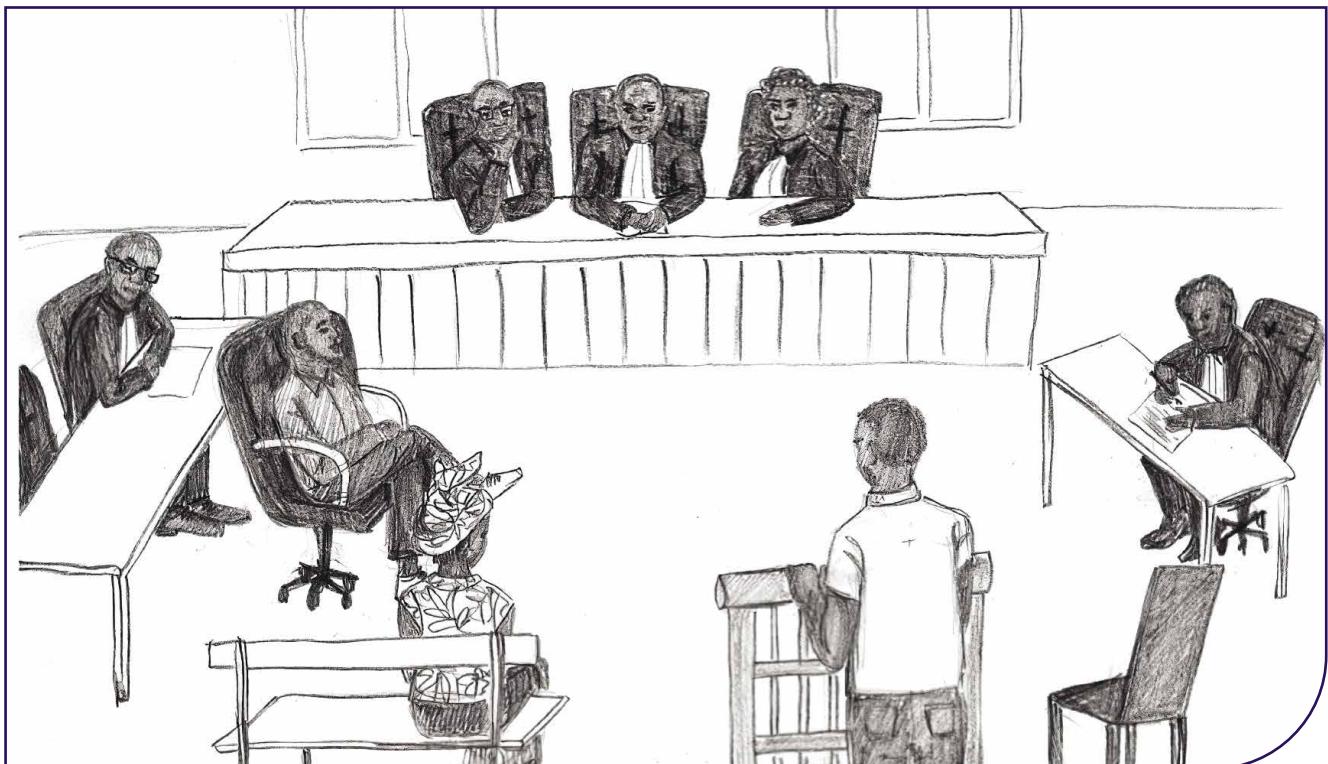
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## 18. Is the language of justice a just language for all? Comparing interpreting practices in Burkina Faso's and Senegal's penal courts

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### Abstract

Interpreting has always been a routine practice in highly plurilingual societies, particularly in Burkina Faso and Senegal, where up to 70 languages are spoken. In this chapter, we focus on contemporary interpretation practices at the penal courts of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, and Dakar, Senegal. As former French colonies, both countries still use a version of French penal law and procedure that was imported during the colonisation period. We thus presupposed that the principles of interpretation and translation in court would be largely similar. This is not the case, however. The difference in the ways the two states treat questions pertaining to interpretation in court constitutes the main focus of this chapter, which looks at the why and the how of court interpretation.

### Introduction

Penal trials taking place at the *Tribunal de grande instance* (TGI, the Regional High Court) in Bobo-Dioulasso or at the *Palais de justice* (the Courthouse) in Dakar follow a predictable choreography. The courtroom is very much like Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone (1991), which she defines as a space where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other. The choreography of some is the struggle of others; while the members of the court know the choreography by heart, defendants, witnesses and victims – in short, those coming from the outside – are not familiar with courtroom procedure. And why should they be? Going to court is not an everyday situation, but quite an extreme occurrence, something out of the ordinary. This particular contact zone – the courtroom – is set up like a stage, with the three judges making up a penal trial facing the audience.

We sit in the audience, facing them. To their left we find the prosecutor sitting at his desk, to their right the scribe, *le greffier*. All five of them wear the black robe, *la toge*. The only person who is part of the court and not clad in a black robe is the interpreter-cum-clerk. And here the similarities of court procedure between Bobo-Dioulasso and Dakar end.

On both a descriptive and an analytical level, this is what we will focus on in this chapter: the continuities and the breaks in how penal trials are handled in Senegal and Burkina Faso. Both countries were colonised by France and used to be part of the colonial geographical-political space called *Afrique occidentale française* (French West Africa). In spite of these historical similarities, the territories that have become Senegal and Burkina Faso have developed – for reasons we will look at more closely here – different ways of dealing with and attitudes towards communication in court.

We begin this chapter by taking a closer look at interpretation and translation studies, in sociolinguistics and in social/linguistic anthropology in legal contexts, before moving on to a historical description of interpreting in African societies. We will then describe and look at interpreting practices at the courts in Bobo-Dioulasso and in Dakar in a comparative way, with reference to specific examples.

In highly plurilingual societies interpreting and translating are a routine practice which people engage in daily. Our interest focuses on the position languages are accorded in West African societies, paying particular attention to the opposing pair of 'official' versus 'national' languages. This presupposes a study and an understanding of French colonisation and the ideology guiding it, the French *mission civilisatrice*. Looking at contemporary interpretation practices in the penal courts in Bobo-Dioulasso and in Dakar also entails a historical understanding of the position interpreting and interpreters or linguists inhabited as intermediaries, brokers and mediators as well as the role they assumed and were expected to play as *jeli* and *jottalikat* – *griot* in French – before French colonisation.

When looking at the role of the linguist across time in the territories in West Africa formerly colonised by France, we will thus pay particular attention to the education system the French had set up and how this has been perpetuated after independence by the new governments. The legal system was also imported from France and today penal law remains largely unchanged.

There are numerous studies investigating communication in court,<sup>1</sup> but not in African legal contexts. We want to fill this research gap.<sup>2</sup> The main question orienting our investigations is both a why and a how question: we want to understand what arguments support the idea that the justice system maintains and perpetuates certain language practices, which are profoundly anchored in (historically grown) injustice. Our particular emphasis in analysing courtroom talk as discursive praxis will be on power relations in the courtroom and how these relate to and are reproduced by, but also transformed by, power relations in larger society (Fairclough, 1993).

This chapter is based on over 200 hours of observation of interpreted penal trials. Numerous interviews with judges and prosecutors and with the interpreters hired to translate at the two courthouses complement our empirical research. We also obtained permission to talk to convicted criminals doing time in prison in Burkina Faso whose trials had been conducted through the intermediation of a court interpreter.<sup>3</sup>

To frame our analysis and description, we refer to two Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4 and SDG 16, both equally relevant to our analysis. SDG 4 (Quality education) is important because a specific kind of education is at the heart of the situation we observe, i.e. a state-run educational system perpetuating a particular form of language use supported through its language policy. SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) applies because we are concerned about equal access to justice for all: is this possible under the circumstances we describe?

To conclude, we make suggestions of suitable areas for further research.

## Review of the literature

In Europe, the USA or Australia, numerous studies have been carried out on interpreting practices in court. These studies all deal with the situation of linguistic minorities (Berk-Seligson, 2008; Eades, 2000, 2003, 2008; Hale, 1997; Hale & Gibbons, 1999; Hale et al., 2011), mainly in migration contexts (Angermeyer, 2008, 2009, 2014) or asylum-seeking contexts (Inghilleri, 2005; Määttä, 2015; Merlini, 2009; Rienzner & Slezak, 2010). One common finding in all of these studies is the disadvantage experienced by minority speakers either because of their accent or dialect or because of the way in which the interpreter translates their spoken words.

1. See among others Angermeyer (2014), Berk-Seligson (2008) and Eades (2008), discussed in more detail below.
2. Our research had initially been limited to court interpretation in Burkina Faso, but when we started visiting penal trials in Dakar, we were surprised just how differently communication in court is handled there. We wanted to find out more and decided to integrate court procedures in Dakar into our research plan in order to better understand what motivates the very different communicative practices in these two former French colonies.
3. Two group interviews, one with three convicted women, the other with five convicted men.

By researching interpreting practices in a courtroom in Burkina Faso and Senegal, we are looking at quite a different situation. We are not dealing with migrants or minority speakers, but a speaker majority 'on its home turf', challenged with an institutionally imposed, mandatory language which is not theirs. This makes the situation in court quite extraordinary because, as a result, the majority of trials need interpretation. We found that in Dakar, out of a sample of 60 penal cases conducted at the *Palais de justice*, approximately one-third required interpretation. In Bobo-Dioulasso, in 2017, in a randomly selected sample of 50 out of a total of 600 *correctionnel* trials (for less severe crimes, see 'The case of Douba' below), 12 were conducted in French, while 38 required interpretation; and the year before, in 2016, eight trials were held in French and 42 were interpreted (in a random sample of 50, out of a total of 445 *correctionnel* trials).<sup>4</sup>

There is also an extensive amount of historical research that has been carried out on the role of interpreters and clerks during the colonial period in Africa (Austen, 2011; Lawrence et al., 2006; Mopoho, 2001; Osborn, 2003) or in pre-colonial times (Austen & Derrick, 1999). Some studies analyse interpreting in court in African legal contexts today: Moeketsi, for example, has done pioneering work in South Africa through her research on *ad hoc* interpreters and went on to develop court interpreter training programmes (Moeketsi, 1999). These programmes never became institutionalised, as described by Lebese (2011, 2013). However, research specifically dedicated to court interpreting and to the shape that justice takes when untrained interpreters are deployed is non-existent for French West Africa.

Here we note a research gap, particularly for the former French colonies, where the entire judicial system is French-oriented, both linguistically and administratively, yet continued and exclusive use of the official language, French, in Burkina Faso's and, to a lesser degree, Senegal's courts would seem counterproductive in these plurilingual countries. Why continue using French if most people, particularly defendants, cannot speak it? Who benefits if only judges and prosecutors can use it? It seems easy to answer: the power relations in court allow this imbalance to be perpetuated in favour of the court. However, this all too obvious conclusion deserves a more careful analysis through comparing language policies over different periods in history in the two countries and by looking at language ideologies.

Burkina Faso and Senegal both adopted the French justice and education systems almost unchanged after independence and have perpetuated language policies introduced during colonial times, and today continue to name French as the only official language in their constitutions. In spite of these basic (historical) similarities, communication in court is handled completely differently in each country.

## Background and empirical work

In Senegal, some 30 languages are spoken, in Burkina Faso around 70.<sup>5</sup> Quantification is highly controversial because it always depends on who does the counting and for what purpose. Often, definitional problems already start at what constitutes a language, what a dialect. The main criteria taken into account when defining a language are varying combinations of having national status, being written, being the standard form of a range of speech varieties, not being intelligible to speakers of other 'languages' and having relatively large numbers of native speakers (see Heine & Nurse, 2000). Or to put it differently, what constitutes a language continues to be associated with politics, language policies and ideology. In addition, African scholars do not make the same distinctions between languages as European science has done since colonial times.

*[T]he conceptualisation of African languages as bounded and static entities was, rather than a reflection of an objective African reality, a product of 19th century European discourse.... Linguistic and other borders and boundaries accepted in Europe as 'scientific', and hence incontrovertible givens, were applied to Africa.*

**Harries (1987: p. 2)<sup>6</sup>**

And because there seems to be no agreement among linguists as to what counts as a language or as dialect (Wolff, 2000), numbers do not really mean much.

Yet pointing to the plurality of languages in use in Senegal and Burkina Faso forms part of the backdrop to our investigations. In both countries only French figures as the official language, specifically mentioned as such in both constitutions. In the Constitution of Burkina Faso,<sup>7</sup> all other languages are lumped together under the label *langues nationales* (national languages), as stated in Article 35: '*La langue officielle est le français. La loi fixe les modalités de promotion et d'officialisation des langues nationales*' ('The official language is French.

4. Numbers for Dakar collected with court interpreter Douba (name anonymised, see below). Statistics of penal trials conducted at the TGI in Bobo-Dioulasso are not yet available in electronic form; the numbers presented here were kindly collected and calculated for us by the greffier en chef (the chief clerk), M Aristide Thombiano, in December 2018.
5. Also called 'national languages', but this term does not do justice to languages such as Jola, Wolof or Pulaar, which are international languages, spoken in different West African states, also called *langues transfrontalières* (cross-border languages) in French. For differing opinions of how many languages are spoken in Burkina Faso, see Diallo (2004).
6. Harries, P. The roots of ethnicity: Discourse and the politics of language construction in South-East Africa. Unpublished paper presented at the Wits History Workshop: The making of class, University of the Witwatersrand, 9–14 February 1987. Available online at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7849>
7. The Constitution of Burkina Faso is available online at: <https://lavoixdujuristebf.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/constitution-du-burkina-faso2.pdf>

The law decides on how national languages shall be promoted and made official').<sup>8</sup> Senegal's constitution<sup>9</sup> mentions six African languages to be considered for promotion and standardisation in Article 1: '*La langue officielle de la République du Sénégal est le Français. Les langues nationales sont le Diola, le Malinké, le Pular, le Sérère, le Soninké, le Wolof et toute autre langue nationale qui sera codifiée*' ('The official language of the Republic of Senegal is French. National languages are Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke, Wolof and any other national language which will be codified').

Around 29 per cent of Senegalese speak French (Wolff, 2014) and only 0.01 per cent of Burkinabé use French as a family language, while less than two per cent describe themselves as confirmed francophones (Diallo, 2004).<sup>10</sup> In Senegal and particularly in Dakar, Wolof has evolved into a vehicular language most citizens can use with adequate proficiency, while in Bobo-Dioulasso, Jola has become a pan-dialectal lingua franca everybody speaks at least as a second language (Sanogo, 2013). In other words, most judges speak Jola, but use French for administrative purposes – it could be said that bureaucratisation makes local forms of rationality subordinate to it. In fact, one judge expressed it in the following manner, citing three reasons for why French is used during trials.

1. It is the official language as stated in the constitution.
2. The principle of equality of all citizens before the law demands the use of the official language.
3. Judges are obliged to be impartial, which includes addressing defendants in the official language (Judge A, 1 June 2017).

However, these attitudes towards languages are highly ideological. Linguistic anthropologist Woolard describes language ideology to mean the cultural construals of the structure and role of language in social life, together with their political and moral loading (Woolard, 2008). Indeed, French is the only permitted language of instruction in the state education system and is the language of law school and later of the *École nationale de l'administration et de la magistrature* (ENAM), where future judges, prosecutors and court clerks are trained. Or, to put it more simply: French is the language of the law.

Our research focus, when looking at translational practices in today's courts, is on penal trials. We chose this focus because both Senegal and Burkina Faso ratified the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1978 and in 1999,<sup>11</sup> respectively, which 'specifically guarantees one's right to the free assistance of an interpreter if one does not understand or speak the language used in court' (Mikkelsen & Jourdenais, 2015: p. 186).<sup>12</sup> This human right is acted upon only in penal courts. The Ministry of Justice in Burkina Faso mandates the individual penal courts, the TGI, to recruit interpreters to fulfil this ratified human rights convention. This poses serious challenges to the individual courts because there are no trained court interpreters in Burkina Faso for the simple reason that no interpreter training for court interpreting exists, neither in Burkina Faso nor in any other West African state – with the noteworthy exception of Senegal. Therefore, the decision to hire a court interpreter in Burkina Faso is based solely on bureaucratic criteria and not upon merit or education and training.

Who are the interpreters working at penal courts in Burkina Faso? What are their trajectories and how did they get recruited to interpret the highly complex communication in court? To paint a more complete picture of the job of today's court interpreter, we will describe the trajectories of Paul (the well-connected school drop-out) and Salomon (the self-made man, being at the right place at the right time), both of them court interpreters working at the TGI in Bobo-Dioulasso.<sup>13</sup> As a contrast, we will follow Douba's educational itinerary on the road to becoming a court interpreter for Wolof and Arabic at the *Palais de justice* in Dakar.

## From *jottalikat* and *jeli* to *Wangrin*, Paul, Salomon and Douba: The role of interpreters over time in West African societies

The West African linguist, called *griot* by the French, and *jeli* in the Mande world, had a clearly designated position as embellisher of the sovereign's words. Protocol demanded that the king should not address his people directly, but pass through an intermediary, his linguist, to transmit his message to the population. Here it is important to note that the *jeli* might embellish the king's words, make them palatable to the people, but he never altered the meaning the king wanted to convey (Bandia, 2005). With increasing Arabic influence in West Africa, *jeli* found a specialised function and designation as *jottalikat* in the Wolof-speaking world as relayers of religious guides' or marabouts' message to the community.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, there

8. All translations by authors except where noted otherwise.
9. The Constitution of Senegal is available online at: [www.jurisafrica.org/docs/constitutions/Constitution%20of%20Senegal.pdf](http://www.jurisafrica.org/docs/constitutions/Constitution%20of%20Senegal.pdf)
10. As to our knowledge, there are no newer publications looking at speaker attitudes towards the use of French versus national languages. Here, it would also be interesting to see if there are differences in these attitudes between men and women.
11. See [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en)
12. See Article 14(f) of the treaty, available online at: [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx).
13. All names are pseudonyms.
14. See Ly, MA (2008) *Langues et religions au Sénégal. Une étude sociolinguistique des attitudes linguistiques*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Montpellier: Universit. Paul Valéry, Montpellier III. Available online at: <https://scannr.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/publication/these2008MON30038>

are two types of *jeli*, the traditional *jeli*, found throughout West Africa until today, and the 'religious *jeli*' – the Wolof *jottalikat* – who are specialised interpreters accompanying religious guides in some Muslim communities such as the Murid or the Tijaan in Senegal.<sup>15</sup>

The French colonisers trained a class of men to further their colonial project. Being able to communicate with the colonised was one of the preconditions for the imposition of colonial power.

*This went beyond the (trivial) fact of verbal exchanges, because in the long run such exchanges depended on a shared communicative praxis providing the common ground on which unilateral claims could be imposed.*

### Fabian (1986: p. 3)

The French soon realised that to further their colonial project, they had to be able to reach the local population. For this, they needed autochthonous intermediaries who were able to speak, write and read French (Calvet, 2010). These intermediaries were crucial. They had to master not only the French language, but also legal and cultural concepts and categories, which they then had to translate in terms that made sense to Europeans and Africans alike (Lawrance et al., 2006; Mopoho, 2001).

At the *École des otages*<sup>16</sup> training school – later more tellingly renamed *École des fils de chefs et des interprètes* (School of the sons of chiefs and of interpreters) – which was opened in Saint Louis du Senegal in 1850, future interpreters and clerks took classes allowing them to enter the colonial administrative service as intermediaries. This education was clearly geared towards the one goal – to train locals to assist the colonial project:

*[D]ès cette époque, les grandes orientations données à l'enseignement visaient à donner aux Africains un enseignement à but utilitaire.... Cette idée est reprise par Albert Tévodjré cité par Ekanza (1972) en ces termes. 'L'enseignement sera développé aux colonies dans la mesure où il servira les intérêts coloniaux.'*

Kouadio N'guessan (2008: p. 2)<sup>17</sup>

Wangrin, a character based on a man who really lived, was eternalised in Hampâté Bâ's seminal work of *faction*<sup>18</sup> *L'étrange destin de Wangrin* in 1973. He represented the colonial translator-interpreter par excellence and as such enjoyed great prestige – and was feared as well – among the local population and the colonial administrators alike. He had received a specialised education at the French colonial schools. However:

*Ce besoin d'auxiliaires capables de seconder l'autorité coloniale pour réaliser son programme d'expansion politico-économique va guider les responsables de l'enseignement dans leur choix du contenu de celui-ci.*

Kouadio N'guessan (2008: p. 2)<sup>19</sup>

Wangrin represents one of the more famous examples of colonial clerks who were educated by the French in order to be hired.<sup>20</sup> Their training, however, was oriented more towards learning the French language and civilisation than towards techniques of interpretation (Lawrance et al., 2006; Dulucq et al., 2008).

The education introduced by the French schools installed in Senegal – the *École des otages* mentioned above, but also the *École normale William Ponty* – was conceived for the entire territory of colonial French West Africa; students were recruited from as far away as today's Niger (Jézéquel, 2003). Numerous West African leaders, who became the first presidents after independence, had been educated in these French schools. Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire, Hamani Diori in Niger, Mobido Keita in Mali, Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal: all were highly educated men who, for political–strategic reasons, carried over the pre-existing French justice system and continued with the language policies of the former colonisers after independence (Canut, 2010; Midiohouan, 1988). These policies of assimilation were and continue to be supported by La Francophonie, an institution many designate as the neo-colonial continuation of French colonial policies (*ibid.*).

15. There is an abundance of literature on griots and *jeli* in West Africa. See, for example, Bornand (1999, 2005).
16. Translated literally, *École des otages* is School of hostages.
17. Translation: 'From this time period onwards, the overall goals of the education system was clearly to give Africans a purely utilitarian education [...]. This idea was taken up by Albert Tévodjré, quoted by Ekanza (1972) in the following terms. 'Education was developed in the colonies only insofar as it would serve colonial interests.'
18. The term 'faction' brings together 'fact' and 'fiction'. On the classification of Hampâté Bâ's work *L'Etrange Destin de Wangrin* as novel or biography, fiction or non-fiction, see Moura (2006). In anthropology, the method of transcribing observations or lived experiences long after the actual happening is considered debatable as reliable source of information. That is why we prefer designating the work *Wangrin* as *faction* and not as the 'autobiography of a dead man' (Moura, 2006: p. 91).
19. Translation: 'This need for auxiliaries, who would be capable of assisting colonial authority so that it could put its political-economic programme of expansion into practice, would guide the choices of those in charge of education as to the contents of that education.'
20. For other examples of works of *faction* dealing with education and the colonial era in French Africa, we would like to draw attention to Hampâté Bâ's *Mémoires* (1991, 1994), Bernard Dadié's *Climbié* (1956), Pierre Samy's *L'odyssée de Mongou* (1977), or to *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* by Ferdinand Oyono (1956).

## Comparing interpreting practices in Burkina Faso and Senegal's courtrooms

### The cases of Salomon and Paul in Burkina Faso

The legal system in the former French colonies in West Africa is based on civil law, and procedure is inquisitorial. This means interrogation of defendants, witnesses and victims is carried out by the presiding judges and the prosecutor; there is no jury. This system attributes clearly defined roles to the participants in the courtroom space. There are strict communication rules to follow: who is allowed to speak when, to whom, how and in which language is prescribed. In Burkina Faso, the members of the court communicate exclusively in French during a trial, both among themselves and with defendants, witnesses and victims.

We have established that the employment of court interpreters at the TGI in Burkina Faso today is not based on merit or education. It seems that the importance accorded to the training of administrative personnel during colonial times has been diluted; no tertiary institution offers court interpreter training in Burkina Faso today. The professional education of all court personnel consists of training at the *École nationale de l'administration et de la magistrature* (ENAM, National School of Administration and Magistrates), the country's top higher education institution for public sector officials and the judiciary. Being able to study there is based on a highly competitive entrance exam (*concours*).

Looking at the trajectories of men hired as interpreters at the TGI in Bobo-Dioulasso sheds some light on the place accorded to interpreters and their training.

Salomon happened to be at the right place at the right time and initially had no intention of being hired as an interpreter. He had his own business after getting his Bac (*baccalauréat*, the qualification exam taken upon completion of upper secondary school), and fell into hard times. He was glad to get a position as secretary at the TGI. Eventually, he was asked to interpret during the *criminel* penal trials (trials dealing with more serious crimes – discussed in more detail below). He was then hired as a court interpreter in 2013, when courts decided to implement the law ratified in 1999.

Paul, on the other hand, had dropped out of school, never making it beyond primary level. He has a family contact in a government ministry who secured a job for him at the TGI in Bobo-Dioulasso. Paul, too, was then asked to work as an interpreter in 2013, for the *correctionnel* penal trials. Both Salomon and Paul have been doing it ever since.

### The case of Douba in Senegal

In Senegal the situation is very different. Interpreters have been hired to work in the courts since 1997. Court interpreter training was started in 2014, when the Ministry of Justice called upon judge Ahmeth Diouf to set up a system to recruit and train court interpreters. Diouf was known for his personal interest in creating glossaries for legal expressions in Wolof. He was collaborating with linguist Arame Fal from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, working on finding equivalent expressions in Wolof for French legal terminology (Judge B, 1 December 2017). Today, Wolof is spoken during penal trials designated as *correctionnels*, while an interpreter translates those trials that are part of a *procès criminel*. This is because the French code pénal (penal code) makes a distinction between *procès criminels*, which deal with more severe cases such as murder or armed robbery and are consequently more harshly punished than penal cases designated as *correctionnels*. Or, in the words of a judge working at the *Palais de justice* in Dakar: the *procès criminels* treat the harder cases and thus demand a more solemn attitude, which necessitates speaking French (Judge C, 3 April 2017).

This means that in the *procès correctionnels*, judges and prosecutors are able to speak to defendants, witnesses and victims directly, without having to go through an interpreter. In cases labelled as *criminels*, judges must use French, as in Burkina Faso, but with the key difference that at the *Palais de justice* in Dakar, trained court interpreters translate the complex legal proceedings for defendants into one of the six recognised national languages. Today, there are 46 accredited court interpreters working at courts across Senegal.

Douba is one of these 46 court interpreters. He was trained at the *Centre de formation judiciaire* (CFJ, the Centre of Legal Training), which is the equivalent of the Burkinabé ENAM, described above – although the CFJ, unlike ENAM, does offer specific training and accreditation for court interpreters. Douba had been working at the *Palais de justice* in Dakar for several years before that and, like his colleagues, is specialised in one of the six national languages stipulated in the constitution (see above) and which is his mother tongue (Wolof in his case), and also in Arabic. Often, interpreters are able to prepare themselves for trials by receiving a copy of the day's agenda, *l'ordonnance de renvoi*, which contains a summary of cases to be treated (Interpreter D, 1 December 2017).

The main prerequisite for applying to the CFJ to be trained as a court interpreter is to have successfully completed the Bac exam in any one of its specialised subjects, i.e. modern languages, economics, etc. Training at the CFJ takes two years. The emphasis is on legal terminology in the required six official Senegalese languages mentioned in the constitution

(developed by Diouf and Fal as described above) and on a basic understanding of the judicial system. Learning interpreting techniques is not part of CFJ training, however; trainers are magistrates with an interest in languages and linguistics (Judge B, 1 December 2017).

The unique situation in Dakar,<sup>21</sup> in which trained court interpreters translate legal proceedings for defendants, immediately raises the question of whether this makes a positive difference in terms of access to justice, communication during trials, and defendants' subsequent understanding of the procedure.

## Bringing it all together: When justice and yoon<sup>22</sup> do not speak the same language – power relations in court and the role of interpretation

Is access to justice fairer and more equal for defendants in Dakar where they can use their mother tongue? And does being able to speak in one's mother tongue during a trial, and being able to speak to the judge directly, without having to go through an interpreter, make the system and procedure more accessible and understandable? Or in Ly, Seck and Samb's words in their presentation at the 12th Language and Development Conference:

*Comment traduire ceux pour qui la justice de la Robe ne parle pas ou qui ne la comprennent qu'en la médiatisant dans un langage [...] qui ne parle pas à cette justice ? (How does one send before the courts people for whom the official justice system does not speak, or who only understand it by mediating it through a language that does not speak to this justice?)<sup>23</sup>*

During interpreted trials, a so-called 'trialogic' communication model can be observed, where judges and prosecutors need to communicate with defendants, witnesses and victims via an interpreter. This type of communication is highly asymmetrical in terms of power and knowledge and can usually be found in di- or polyglossic contexts, as most community and public service interpreting situations entail (Klimkiewicz, 2005). This hierarchisation is found on multiple levels; knowledge as well as power is distributed unevenly and clearly in favour of the court.

*Power asymmetries between different knowledge practices in contact are invariably involved in events of translation within such projects, as are differences of institutional authority.*

Gal (2015: p. 227)

How do these contests over power in the courtroom connect to the broader issues of power and inequality surrounding the powerless in the penal justice system (Eades, 2008) and in society at large? As mentioned above, a courtroom constitutes an extreme situation, not everyday reality. For example, the language used in court – referred to as legalese – is often unintelligible to defendants. They do not understand legal French jargon; many untrained interpreters do not either, as we can see when judges ask interpreters to translate again, this time more faithfully (as observed in Bobo-Dioulasso at various trials).

Power relations in the courtroom are therefore tilted towards the members of the court from the outset: the entire system of justice is built upon the French language; judges and prosecutors pursued their law studies in French, then went to ENAM and CFJ, where courses are again taught in French; possessing French language skills clearly puts the court at a significant advantage over those participants in the courtroom who cannot communicate well in French; and making French mandatory in court is one way of excluding certain people from fully participating in a trial.

A detainee in prison in Burkina Faso, who was tried and convicted several years before our interview with them, is upset even today that they were forced by the court to stand for their trial using French because they could express themselves in the official language – albeit at a rudimentary level, having never learned it because they did not go to school. They were refused an interpreter because the judges deemed their French skills sufficient, an assessment they did not share, and subsequently could not follow their own trial adequately (interview [date withheld]). Myers-Scotton has coined the term 'elite closure' when describing this kind of situation.

Elite closure:

*is a type of social mobilisation strategy by which those persons in power establish or maintain their powers and privileges via linguistic choices... [It] is accomplished when the elite successfully employ official language policies and their own non-formalised language usage patterns to limit access of nonelite groups to political position and socioeconomic advancement.*

Myers-Scotton (1993: p. 149)

21. As mentioned above, court interpreters work in various cities throughout Senegal, but since our research was carried out at the *Palais de justice* in Dakar, we here only discuss the situation in Dakar.
22. Yoon means 'justice' in Wolof.
23. Presentation by Mouhamed Abdallah Ly, Abdourahmane Seck and Yamar Samb at the Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 28 November 2017: *Regards croisés sur « langue », « droit » et « développement » : en exemple le cas du Sénégal*. See Ly, Seck and Samb (this volume) for a development of their argument.

There are two forms of power to take into consideration: the *de jure* power invested in judges and the institution over defendants (as well as witnesses and victims), and the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1977) they have over them. Symbolic power as proposed by Bourdieu is the power of a system to impose its way of thinking on a dominated population, be it through education or the media or through a more powerful position in a social hierarchy.

Yet the relations of power we find in a courtroom did not just appear from nowhere, but are a continuation of the relations of power in wider society (Fairclough, 1993). Language does not exist in a vacuum; it is inseparable from its social context. This means that we need to look at both the courtroom and the larger picture; or to put it more sociologically, we need both a micro and a macro analysis. The situational struggle between judges and prosecutors on the one hand and defendants, witnesses and victims on the other needs to be embedded in a macro-sociological analysis of the societal struggle which is behind this courtroom discourse.

## Outlook in lieu of a conclusion

Research in both linguistics and legal studies has shown that the justice system, in general and in different settings, does not deliver on its main promise, namely to provide equal access to justice for all (see Eades, 2008). What is needed now are studies that show how this system fails to deliver justice and the consequences thereof. Particularly for plurilingual African settings, more in-depth research is needed on instances of court interpreting. First, we might ask to what degree ratified human rights conventions such as the right to the free assistance of an interpreter during one's trial have been implemented on a procedural level, on the ground. In Burkina Faso, this implementation stops at the hiring of untrained people to work as interpreters during penal trials.

In terms of procedure, we might ask why penal law only mandatorily demands translation of the accusation and the sentence in a trial – why does the interpreter not, for example, translate the prosecutor's deliberations, which include the justification for their recommendation for a sentence? And, even more importantly, why is this not included in SDG 16? In the words of Nirvana Bhatia's talk at the 12th Language and Development Conference: 'The absurdity of not including language rights in SDG 16.'<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, much has been done in both Burkina Faso and Senegal in terms of the creation of glossaries, dictionaries, and the translation of legal documents. In Senegal, some of these documents are specifically created for the training of court interpreters, such as the textbook and glossary *Lexique de fin de formation en Français, Anglais, et Wolof (Final year glossary in French, English, and Wolof)* used in the final year of interpreter training in Dakar.<sup>25</sup> What we have established in Burkina Faso, however, is that different researchers, who are working on creating legal glossaries, dictionaries, and the translation of the constitution into Jola,<sup>26</sup> are not aware of each other's work. As a consequence, multiple glossaries of legal terminology are available today, but they feature many and different expressions in Jola for the same French legal terms. In addition, the people working as court interpreters at the TGI in Bobo-Dioulasso are unaware of the existence of those legal documents which have been created in, or translated into, Jola, as shown during our investigations, where none of the court interpreters interviewed had ever heard of the existence of these glossaries and legal term dictionaries in Jola. Transversal communication, both between researchers across disciplines who translate and create legal documentation in Jola, and between researchers and those who need to use legal terminology professionally in French and in Jola, could be a starting point for more equal access to justice for all.

When discussing court interpretation, scholars<sup>27</sup> agree that training for interpreters is a necessity. However, what is often overlooked is that judges, lawyers and other court personnel working with interpreters also need to be sensitised to the work interpreters do (discussed in Eades, 2008). Court personnel need to be made aware not only of the pitfalls of inter-cultural communication, but also of the work interpreters actually do and can do. This clearly goes beyond the scope of this chapter, however, where the focus is on the relationship between language and power at the *Palais de justice* in Dakar, and the TGI in Bobo-Dioulasso.

24. Unpublished paper presented at the Language and Development Conference, Dakar, on 27 November 2017.

25. CFJ (Centre de Formation Judiciaire) (2016) *Lexique de fin de formation en Français, Anglais et Wolof. Promotion: 2014-2016. Sous-section: Interprètes judiciaires*. Unpublished textbook. Dakar: Ministère de la justice, CFJ.

26. The Burkinabé Constitution was translated from French into Jola by sociolinguist ML Sanogo at the INSS (*Institut de Science des Sociétés*), the national social science research centre in Ouagadougou, and published in 1991.

27. Among others, consult Kleinert and Stallaert (2015, 2018) and Valero Garcés and Dergam (2003).

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# 19. Different perspectives on the accessibility of legal language in Senegal

Mouhamed Abdallah Ly, Abdourahmane Seck and Yamar Samb

## Abstract

Is it possible to achieve a mutually reinforcing inter-relationship between the 'rule of law' and 'sustainable development' in a society if the legal language is inaccessible or difficult to understand? The focus of this chapter is drawn from three researchers, from three distinct fields of knowledge – language science, legal science and anthropology – jointly considering different sources and knowledge from their respective disciplines to produce a reflection on, and possible solutions to, the issue of the accessibility and intelligibility of legal language in Senegal.

## Introduction

The issue discussed in this chapter is fundamentally linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 16 states that 'the rule of law and development are closely linked and mutually reinforcing, which makes them essential for sustainable development' (United Nations, 2015) and calls for 'equal access to justice for all' (paragraph 16.3). Is it not the proper application of the law in a state, and thus giving *all* people access to peaceful solutions to disputes between citizen and state, or between citizen and citizen, that guarantees security, peace, social cohesion and, ultimately, sustainable development?

The 'language barrier' is rarely at the heart of the debate on access to justice in Senegal. Indeed, inaccessibility is primarily measured through criteria such as 'the unequal geographical coverage of the courts', 'financial barriers' and 'legal barriers' (Samb, 2014: p. 83).

We are three researchers from three distinct fields of knowledge: language sciences, legal sciences and anthropology. In this chapter, we jointly attempt to use sources and knowledge from our respective disciplines to reflect on and find possible solutions to the following question: how can we achieve what we call a mutually reinforcing inter-relationship between the 'rule of law' and 'sustainable development' in a country if the legal language is inaccessible or difficult to understand?

We started from the premise that when people are unfamiliar with the language used in the legal world, there results 'a situation which is detrimental to the fundamental rights of those subject to the legal process, and to the image of justice itself, which may also be harmful to the assertion of democracy and the pursuit of development' (Halaoui, 2002: p. 346). It therefore appeared useful to seek to propose possible avenues leading to a reform of legal language. A reform introducing a dose of 'pluralism' would, in our view, ensure better access to, and understanding of, the law in Senegal; this would also help ensure the law is more effective and performs better in what is widely recognised as a 'multicultural and multilingual' (Cissé, 2011: p. 3), indeed a 'complex plurilingual' (Dreyfus & Juillard, 2004: p. 60) society.

We begin this chapter with a brief review of the sociolinguistic context in Senegal. This is followed by an assessment of the accessibility and intelligibility of the legal language which will better enable the reader to assess the potential solutions we propose.

## The sociolinguistic context in Senegal

With approximately 20 languages spoken by some 15 communities (Cissé, 2005; DPLN, 2002), Senegal is a country marked by ethno-linguistic diversity. The unequal distribution of language statuses (official language/national languages), as well as the heterogeneity of functions (vehicular and vernacular languages<sup>1</sup>) and representations (dominant languages/minority languages), has a marked influence on the coexistence of these languages and can lead to competitive, not to say conflicting, dynamics between them.

Among these languages, Wolof is known both as the language of the members of the eponymous ethnic group (about 40 per cent of the population) and as a lingua franca, spoken by at least 80 per cent of the population (Leconte, 1998). Wolof is used in more and more formal spaces that were once considered the preserve of the French language. Indeed, many field studies indicate that oral communications in various 'formal' or 'official' settings are now conducted in Wolof (Cissé, 2011).

1. From 1960 to 2000, the Senegalese Constitution recognised six Senegalese languages as 'national languages' following their codification: Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke and Wolof. The report of the Senegalese government's National Language Office (2002), covering 28 Senegalese languages, recognised two additional categories of language: five 'newly codified' languages and 17 other languages requiring 'an intensive codification programme'. Article 1 of the 2001 constitution states that the six Senegalese languages mentioned in the 1960 constitution remain the national languages of the country, but adds to the list 'any other national language to be codified'.

French remains the only official language according to the Senegalese Constitution. This legitimises its predominance in education, public administration and the courts. Yet French is understood by fewer than 30 per cent of Senegalese people (OIF, 2018). The national languages, whose vitality is unquestionable in the domestic, media, economic and political fields, are now practically all codified and therefore have official orthographies (Diouf, Ndiaye & Diémé, 2017). However, even though they are deployed in some literacy programmes, they remain little used in the formal education system, despite ongoing pilots.

The Arabic language, which is neither an official language nor a national language in Senegal, is imbued with significant symbolic capital especially among the Muslim majority (Sall, 2017), and practically holds the status of liturgical language (Ly, 2008). Arabic is learned in Quranic schools, but is also taught in the various cycles of public education, from primary and secondary schools to Arabic language and civilisation departments in universities. Moreover, the writing of African languages in Arabic characters (called Ajami, or for Wolof in the case of Senegal, Wolofal<sup>2</sup>) has often been used – and this since the colonial period – to raise public awareness in the fields of health, hygiene, trade and agriculture, especially in rural areas (Cissé, 2006). Evangelical organisations, as well as a number of non-governmental organisations, still use it to communicate with their target populations (*ibid.*).

## The inaccessibility of legal language in Senegal

As French is the only official language of the Republic of Senegal, all legislative texts (decrees, byelaws, statutes, circulars), legal doctrine, jurisprudence and court records are written in French. This leads the lawyer Moussa Samb to state that:

*The vast majority of citizens are unaware of the legal texts that govern their daily dealings with the State and their fellow citizens, as well as their own rights and obligations. Consequently, they can neither benefit from, nor exercise, their rights as recognised by law. This situation is mainly due to illiteracy and lack of knowledge of the official language, French.*

**Samb (2014: p. 83)**

2. The word 'Wolofal' refers to Wolof-language writings, transcribed with the use of Arabic characters. The method has been used by other Senegalese and African ethno-linguistic communities. The first people using Wolofal were able to bridge the gap between the Wolof and Arabic phonological systems by using diacritical signs, for example, to compensate for the absence in local languages of phonemes present in the vowel system of the Arabic language. The word 'Wolofal' itself creates a certain idea of 'Africanisation', since the '-al' ending, which is attached to the 'Wolof' lexeme, means 'to turn': thus, 'to turn into Wolof'.
3. The term 'mobile courts' refers to hearings presided over by a judge, and held outside a courthouse, to avoid the parties having to travel, sometimes far, from their place of residence.

While Samb, in referring to 'legal texts' and 'illiteracy', uses the written word as a basis for his diagnosis, Moussa Daff acknowledges the existence of accommodating linguistic practices before the courts, at least for oral communication:

*Before courts presided over by a sworn judge, using French is normally expected. But at mobile courts,<sup>3</sup> it can happen that if the judge speaks the shared vehicular language, he or she allows the complainants, defendants and witnesses to express themselves in that language. If the judge involved does not understand the local lingua franca, he/she is accompanied by an interpreter or, failing that, he/she relies on the local registrar. However, lawyers' pleas and verdicts are pronounced in French. On the premises of the courthouse, conversations between lawyers are often conducted in a national language.*

**Daff (1991: p. 140)**

Therefore, one can conclude that, despite the linguistic tinkering that goes on here and there, the legal language, whether written or spoken, remains relatively inaccessible to the overwhelming majority of those subject to the judicial process.

## The unintelligibility of legal language in Senegal

In addition to the inaccessibility of legal language for those who are illiterate, the issue of its unintelligibility also arises for those who are literate.

According to Samb (2014: p. 83), those subject to the judicial process are faced with 'the use in the courts of a language which is difficult to understand for those who have not been introduced to procedural law'. This opacity stems from – among other things – the polysemy of the legal lexicon, the abundance of technical terms, the endurance of Latin terms, and, in general, the codification of legal texts in a register of *soutenu* (formal) French that is inaccessible to the average person (Fall, 2011). Indeed, as Daff (1991: p. 139) argues, Senegalese legal texts are 'written in sophisticated French that takes, as an implicit reference, the writing style in force in France, where most Senegalese jurists of the first post-independence generation were educated'.

Michelle Malherbe makes a similar observation, not without mentioning the following incongruities:

*National electoral campaigns and even, very often, regional ones, are conducted in Wolof. However, once elected, candidates pass laws and govern using the French language. It is rather paradoxical to say that 'ignorance of the law is no excuse', when this same law is codified in a language that is not understood by the overwhelming majority of citizens. Indeed, legal texts are codified in academic French which is difficult to access.*

**Malherbe (1983: p. 222)**

To appreciate such a paradoxical situation, we should acknowledge that what is called 'academic' or '*soigné*' ('sophisticated') French is used only by a tiny minority of people made up of the fringes of the ruling elite. It is this kind of French that confers on them leadership and distinction, since it is associated with education, knowledge and competence (Ndao, 2002; Thiam, 2017) in addition to its official character which makes it the dominant, reference variety. At the same time, 'sophisticated' French is becoming more and more distant from the idioms of young and urban speakers who, even among those who are attending or have attended school, are turning away from it in favour of colloquial French and urban Wolof in particular (Cissé, 2005, 2011; Auzanneau, 2006) – the languages of oral and informal communication. For these people, legal French is a class-specific language: the preserve of an elite, used above the masses. This results in the paradox of a disdain for 'academic French' that can be detected among many of those subject to the judicial process, on the one hand, and an affection for it on the part of the elite and the lawmakers, on the other.

Reforming legal French to be written more clearly could lead to a better understanding of the law by a larger part of the population and, consequently, to a more effective enforcement of the law – but there are no plans for any reform, because a form of conservatism regarding legal French seems to have got the better of lawmakers. One might even infer a form of fetishism, as an extension of this conservatism, due to lawmakers' affection for legal Latin (Fall, 2011).

In addition to the unintelligibility of legal language there is the problem of terminological and semantic ambiguities in Senegalese law which sometimes render

statements unclear. This can turn these statements into sources of controversy, detrimental to the stability of institutions and democracy. For a long time, such controversies were usually limited to conflicting interpretations of the law in academic circles. Increasingly, however, they create disagreements in politics and in the media which affect the social climate – sometimes with dramatic consequences. For example, in 2011 and 2012, Senegal experienced protests resulting in the loss of human lives, following a controversy about the decision of President Wade to seek a third term in office thanks to what *Jeune Afrique* magazine called a 'reinterpretation' of the law (Souaré, 2017). This is a widespread problem in Africa: in the many countries where elections ignoring the principle of presidential term limits have taken place, ambiguous legal language has often been discussed in public debates and in the press.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the leading ally of the so-called 'constitutional tinkering'<sup>5</sup> in Africa has been the lack of rigour and clarity of legal language.

Of course, constitutional change is an imprescriptible right that cannot be challenged. Rather, what is being challenged here are opportunistic attempts at reform based on legal wrangling, exploiting loopholes in the legal texts, which are proving to be a danger to the stability of our institutions, the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law. As Stéphane Bolle states:

*The succession of ambiguous constitutional laws, which can be interpreted according to the interests of those in power, results in a revival of 'continuism' at the cost of the rule of law and pluralist democracy.*

**Bolle (2012: p. 1)**

This phenomenon creates a sense of legal instability among people subject to the judicial process.

## Qualitative analysis of debates on Senegalese radio talk shows

We carried out a qualitative analysis of the spoken discourse of listeners participating in radio talk shows, called *Wax sa xalaat*,<sup>6</sup> broadcast by Senegalese radio stations during the four weeks following the announcement of President Macky Sall's renunciation of his promise to reduce his mandate from seven to five years on the basis of a controversial opinion given by the Constitutional Council.

4. For example <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/493430/politique/pourquoi-la-limitation-des-mandats-presidentiels-est-utile-dans-lafrigue-daujourdhui/> and <https://www.oeildafrigue.com/node/1107> and <https://afrique.lalibre.be/22221/constitution-amendee-mandats-illimites-oupresque-les-tentatives-de-maintien-au-pouvoir-des-chefs-detat-africains/>
5. *Tripatouillages constitutionnels* (constitutional tinkering) is a common expression used in African French-speaking newspapers by activists and members of civil society to designate constitutional reforms deemed to be serving the consolidation or perpetuation of the powers that be.
6. Talk shows, called *Wax sa xalaat*, broadcast on Radio Sud FM, Walf FM and RFM. These shows hand over to the listeners who call in to give their opinion on the debate of the day.

Our analysis showed a great number of people expressed the following views:

- an inability to understand how lawyers who have been trained at the same law school, and who refer to the same legal texts, can differ and publicly quarrel over conflicting interpretations of a given provision of the constitution
- utter confusion stemming from the feeling that, every time one of the protagonists makes his case on television, the right interpretation is on his side
- concern when a lawyer who initially defended the unconstitutionality of a provision later holds the opposite view as soon as he or she leaves the academic environment for high political office.

For these people, the legal language is fuzzy, malleable and unstable.

## 'Multi-legalism': A reaction against the official legal language

The lack of awareness of legal provisions among illiterate people (accessibility) and the difficulties of those who are put off by the opacity of the current model for writing the law (intelligibility) are clearly sources of frustration.

These two obstacles (linked directly and indirectly to the language used by lawmakers) lead some parties to turn to community-based normative justice systems, as plurilingual spaces, rather than the state legal system that at best only tolerates their languages.

Concerning the use of national languages in alternative normative systems in Senegal, Daff says that in districts and villages:

*The settling of certain minor disputes is conducted in a national language by local neighbourhood chiefs, and/or local religious authorities, according to the rules of customary law. The most common vehicular language is often used in linguistically heterogeneous communities. In the regions of Dakar, Kaolack, Fatick, Thiès, Louga and much of the Saint Louis region, one can expect to find Wolof being used as the lingua franca. In the northern part of the country and in the south, one will find Pulaar, and Mande languages and/or Jola respectively. Bambara is widely used in the Tambacounda region. The use of French is rare in these conditions because it would be felt as too 'formal', even contemptuous towards those who do not understand French.*

**Daff (1991: p. 139)**

This encourages people to comply concurrently with a multiplicity of legal systems – a situation which Vanderlinden (1993) has called 'multi-legalism'. This is particularly the case in Senegal where 'the coexistence of several normative orders (state law, Islamic law, customary laws)' remains a reality (Plançon, 2011: p. 346).

Halaoui notes, in other African contexts, a certain 'mobility' among some parties who, faced with their inability to understand the official legal language, resort to informal arbitration systems instead:

*The exclusive use of the official language [...] takes the parties away from the judge; it rather favours traditional justice systems such as Laawol Pulaaku in Burkina Faso or Gacaca in Rwanda, where the environment, the rules and the language are African.*

**Halaoui (2002: p. 354)**

## The limits of interpretation and translation

In all proceedings (civil, administrative, criminal), courts use interpreters to ensure that parties who do not understand the language of the proceedings are given a supposedly fair trial. Moreover, legal texts such as the constitution are translated into national languages, including Wolof and Pulaar (Diouf & Fal, 2010). However, these processes raise many questions, including the place of the interpreter in the process of legal interpretation.

For example, Halaoui (2002), based on observations in the African legal system, underlines two issues that we refer to as 'over-presence' and 'under-presence'.

- Over-presence can be observed when the interpreter is given 'exaggerated power, that of being the sole holder of the meaning being conveyed in the communication and on which both the judge and the relevant party rely' (*ibid.*: p. 352).
- Under-presence, on the other hand, can be observed when 'the interpreter is present but is not required to convey the exchanges between judges and lawyers to the parties. In fact, the interpreter is not forthcoming at all and intervenes only on their request. Such situations effectively exclude the parties involved, even though it is they who are the most directly concerned. They are thus prevented from participating in any of the discussions' (*ibid.*).

Even when an interpreter is present, there remains the crucial question of whether the interpretation is accurate, especially if it is not done word for word but 'as a whole' – that is to say that the interpreter, in trying to stay faithful to the reliability of the source statement, attempts to convey its overall spirit and meaning.

As for translation, many questions remain unresolved here too. How can we be sure of the right legal terms in Senegalese national languages when legal translation is not an easy exercise even for language or legal professionals? According to Dechamps:

*Legal language is initiatory and impenetrable by nature [...] The complexity is such that this is a cursed sector for the terminologists, lexicographers, translators – and even the lawyers – who have to translate or interpret legal texts.*

**Dechamps (2004: p. 362)**

Often, in legal texts, we are faced with concepts or expressions which, when translated into another language and culture where they do not exist, lose their meaning. Discussing translation into Wolof in the field of constitutional law, Diémé (2013) states that this activity requires not only a mastery of the source and target languages, but also mastery of constitutional law and a good understanding of the host culture. Diémé cites the example of the translation of the Senegalese Constitution into Wolof. Despite their undeniable expertise, the translators Diouf and Fal, faced with the lack of Wolof terminological resources in constitutional law, had to resort to neologisms through derivation, and to a large number of borrowings (*repliblig, politig, décret* ...). But above all, they were unable to avoid 'frequent use of many explanatory paraphrases' (*ibid.*: p. 59).

## Unmaking assumptions, making proposals

In the authors' opinion, problems with the accessibility and intelligibility of legal language endure largely because of the persistent view of justice as a single institution applying a single decision, in a single language, in a single scriptural register, to a great diversity of similar scenarios. This view leads to narrow monolingualism, purism and conservatism among lawmakers. This situation does not seem to be specific to Senegalese lawyers alone. Lenoble and Ost (1981: p. 114) write that, among lawyers in general, there is a 'fascination for unity' in their talk of 'a uniform code' and the 'drafter/lawmaker's unity of will'.

In addition to this view of monolingualism as a source of univocity, clarity, coherence and transparency, we note the following misconceptions:

- the official language is the only admissible medium of the law
- one must be a lawyer to write a legal text.

In other words, legal writing becomes the exclusive preserve of lawyers. This leads to another assumption: 'taking it for granted that lawyers can write, and that they write well' (Lavoie, 2003: p. 306). Since it can be observed, on examination, that such assumptions do not always conform to reality, neither in Senegal nor elsewhere, has the time come to deconstruct them?

To have a legal language which is accessible and intelligible to as many people as possible, Halaoui advocates the following:

*Introducing the dominant languages as languages of the law alongside the official language, integrating the teaching of one of these languages into the training of lawyers, training professional legal translators and interpreters in these languages; and finally, writing official records in these same languages.*

**Halaoui (2002: p. 365)**

In addition to these solutions, we would suggest, on the one hand, clearly mentioning legal language as a linguistic right for those subject to the judicial process in the constitution<sup>7</sup> and, on the other hand, moving towards a plurilingual, pluridisciplinary and pluriscriptural writing of the law.

## A plurilingual approach: Co-drafting legal texts to improve the accessibility and intelligibility of legal language

To enhance the accessibility and intelligibility of legal language, we recommend co-drafting legal texts in French and Wolof and possibly in other national languages. This co-drafting should, however, take account of the actual language competence of those subject to the judicial process. Moreover, co-drafting also implies writing the law in the selected languages simultaneously, instead of writing in French first and then retrospectively writing translations. The versions thus enacted in the different languages would have the force of law.

## A pluridisciplinary approach to reconcile legal texts with their context

Bailleux and Dumont (2010: p. 286) make the observation that the 'monodisciplinary conception of the science of law pays dearly for the lack of intelligibility of legal phenomena'. Further, they say lawyers need to be convinced 'to recognise that an interdisciplinary openness that does not undermine the excellence of legal analysis is both scientifically sound and feasible'

7. The constitution says nothing about the language of those subject to the judicial process, whereas it says a lot about that of the 'potential presidential candidate'. It stipulates in Article 28 that: 'All presidential candidates should be Senegalese nationals, enjoy their civil and political rights and be at least 35 years old on the day of the election. He should be able to write, read and speak the official language fluently.'

(*ibid.*: p. 277). They make this recommendation after noting that:

*A great number of law schools are still resistant – and this is putting it mildly, in many cases... – to the need for rigorous training in social sciences for law students and, a fortiori, to the advantages of interdisciplinary dialogue.*

***Ibid.*: p. 276**

We share their conviction that it is necessary to move away from legal centrism and the ‘monologism of the lawmaker’ (Abolou, 2011: p. 17), and necessary to get lawmakers to work more with researchers in other social sciences and thus engage different kinds of textual and external expertise that could improve the accessibility and intelligibility of legal language. For example, expertise in communication and language sciences could be drawn upon to help lawmakers think about writing understandable legal texts from the outset. Is not the law primarily made up of words, legal texts and their interpretation? As Sparer notes:

*Any text, whether legal or not, is above all a communication tool. It is not always clear whether lawyers [...] always have the right communication skills to guarantee an intelligible final text to readers.*

**Sparer (2002: p. 275)**

It should be remembered that the law is not written independently of any social setting, but in a specific socio-cultural context. Therefore, interdisciplinarity and complementarity between lawyers and linguists, but also between lawyers and anthropologists, sociologists, historians and philosophers, could help to achieve a better reconciliation between legal texts and their context, and between legal texts and the actual language level of the population – thus improving attitudes towards language itself among those who are subject to the judicial process.

### **A pluriscriptural approach for better inclusion**

In view of the issues related to the accessibility and intelligibility of legal language, the question of inclusion must be addressed. To this end, we recommend capitalising on the centuries-old experience of writing national languages in the Arabic alphabet and thus enabling thousands of people to read the law in Wolofal.<sup>8</sup> As Cissé (2006: p. 73) reminds us, Wolofal remains ‘a living process and a reality so present in our daily lives that we don’t even pay attention to it’. Cissé also states that, according to the results of a survey he conducted in

2003, no fewer than 75 per cent of adults can read and write in Arabic characters in certain regions of central and northern Senegal such as Diourbel, Matam and Podor (*ibid.*: p. 77).

### **Conclusion**

With regard to SDG 16, Senegal faces a challenge despite the significant progress seen in the emergence of a local justice system and the popularisation of legal texts. This challenge cannot be met if a feeling is allowed to persist that the language of the law is the preserve of an educated elite or law professionals.

In this chapter we have formulated some potential solutions, while recognising that our proposals are likely to be met with resistance, since the multilingual approach is often seen as an obstacle to uniformity in justice. This leads to the preconceived idea that as long as it remains impossible to choose a single national language in which to interpret the law without causing tensions among the population, it will be difficult to challenge lawmakers’ monolingualism, and therefore to challenge French.

In addition, certain linguistic attitudes are still unfavourable to Wolofal. This is a problem because we know that, in sociolinguistics, no matter how relevant initiatives concerning language management may be, they are likely to be in vain as long as they run counter to the prevailing linguistic attitudes of the population.

This notion of linguistic attitude is important because it reflects the tastes and predispositions of speakers (people subject to the judicial process and lawmakers alike) – not regarding the law as such, but regarding the very language in which the law is interpreted (its usage, variety and style). It should be remembered that speakers do not use languages just to say something: the language they use also reveals their feelings and views, as shown by sociolinguistic studies in various contexts (Atienza, 2006; Bauvois, 1997; Boyer, 1989, 1996, 2017; Lafontaine, 1986, 1997; Lasagabaster, 2006). In any future debate, therefore, it will be important to listen to speakers’ evaluative, derogatory and pejorative discourse about the way in which the law is applied. Consequently, we feel it is critical to conduct a wide-ranging sociolinguistic study of legal language and its representations prior to any reform.

*Translated from the French original by the British Senegalese Institute Translation Unit, Dakar, Senegal, and Philip Harding-Esch.*

8. The practice of writing African languages in Arabic characters is called Ajami or, for Wolof specifically, Wolofal.

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# 20. The challenges presented in refugee camps by the linguistic vacuum of the Sustainable Development Goals

Chris Sowton

## Abstract

Although language issues, both in policy and in practice, are fundamental to the success of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, their key documents and monitoring tools make barely any reference to them. As a result, marginalised people across the world are not reaping the linguistic dividend, despite the clear theoretical and empirical evidence which demonstrates the strong relationship between language ability and development for both individuals and for societies. This chapter looks specifically at three areas where language plays a significant role in refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) contexts, namely:

1. the language of instruction (for education)
2. language acquisition and the reasons for learning additional languages
3. security or power-related issues arising due to languages.

It argues that as refugees and IDPs are squeezed politically and economically at the local, national and international level, language issues become even more important, and ignoring them may have the effect of creating division and contention.

## Introduction

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were introduced in 2015 as a mechanism designed to both build on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and correct some of their shortcomings. Chief of these criticisms is what Nayyar (2012: p. 8) describes as the 'implicit assumption that one-size-fits-all', a criticism which should logically have resulted in greater emphasis in the post-MDG agenda on the importance of language, an ineluctable aspect of being human which enables development to be more contextually relevant.

Yet, despite the clear theoretical and empirical evidence which demonstrates the strong relationship between language ability<sup>1</sup> and development, for individuals as well as societies (e.g. Hoff & Ribot, 2015), language is not referred to anywhere in the 17 goals, 169 targets and 231 indicators of the SDGs.<sup>2</sup> Language is not mentioned in either of the 2016 or 2017 reports. Language is invisible, and as a result marginalised people across the world are not reaping the linguistic dividend. At best this is a sin of omission, at worst one of commission.

In response to this, this chapter attempts to push forward the language agenda, to raise awareness about why the issue of language should be higher up the SDG agenda (or indeed merely on it), considering the impact specifically within the context of refugee camps. Given the lack of empirical research in this field, I do not seek to make specific recommendations, but rather to advance discussion with a view to the language and development community identifying potential next steps.

The impact of the lack of reference to languages in the SDGs is identifiable throughout the SDGs. Deconstructing SDG 16, for example, which focuses on peace, justice and strong institutions,<sup>3</sup> the challenges arising from omitting any reference to language quickly become apparent. The first component of the goal, to 'promote peace and inclusive societies for sustainable development', undermines the strong correlation – indeed causation – which has been identified between language learning and peace. Crystal, for example, discusses the inherent ability of language to increase empathy and people's ability to dialogue with others, arguing that language has a 'unique role in capturing the breadth of human thought and endeavours' (1987: p. 1).

As for the second component, to 'provide access to justice for all', language has a crucial role to play for a group of people for whom both natural and legal justice is so often a distant dream, to enable them to fulfil their own potential and to understand and access their rights

1. This chapter uses a broad interpretation of 'language ability', namely having the language capability (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000) which individuals can use to improve livelihood opportunities and economic integration, fit in and access local services, and engage and influence their peers (Capstick & Delaney, 2016).
2. Sub-indicator 4.5.2: 'Percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction' remains optional (see Benson, this volume).
3. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

and entitlements. In one of this conference's keynotes, Paulin Djité<sup>4</sup> argued that language and communication should be looked at as an 'enabler' rather than a 'disabler', and that language and communication are fundamental variables for capacity development: 'Languages cannot be dissociated from development. They are at the heart of the development process' (see also Djité, this volume).

As for the third component, to 'build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels', the following questions should be asked:

- How can an institution be effective if it is not relevant for all?
- How can an institution be accountable if people don't have the linguistic tools to hold it to account?
- How can an institution be inclusive if those speaking minority languages or less prestigious forms of the dominant language are not able to participate?

Language issues – in both policy and practice – are fundamental to the success, or otherwise, of the SDGs.

As with language, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been largely ignored in the goals, targets and narrative of the SDGs, the tenor of which remains resolutely Westphalian, i.e. state bound. In a world where there are 71 million refugees and IDPs at the very minimum, according to the most recent UNHCR figures (UNHCR, 2019), and in reality almost certainly many more, I would argue that this group of people has a very great need for multilateral support and protection.

It is against such a landscape that language capabilities become even more important. In such a liminal world where refugees and IDPs do not know where they will be living or what they will be doing in the future, and where there are legal, cultural and psychological barriers constraining their attempts to lead a good life, a transferable skill such as language ability, which has both intrinsic and instrumental value, can enhance their life opportunities, for both their present and future selves.

In this chapter, three specific areas in which language plays a significant role in refugee and IDP contexts will be considered, namely:

1. the language of instruction (for education)
2. language acquisition and the reasons for learning additional languages
3. security or power-related issues arising due to languages.

4. Djité, P. Health, the economy and language in Africa: A case study. Paper presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 27 November 2017. See Djité (this volume) for a development of this paper.

5. See, for example, Sowton (2019: p. 14), which describes the case of a 30-year-old Sudanese male refugee living in Jordan being able to learn Spanish because of a Colombian he met in his local area.

## Context

In analysing these three questions, context is crucial. When considering the locus of the refugee camps, while there may be similarities and contiguity between camps, leading to the identification of general trends, it is important to acknowledge that each camp is an idiosyncratic ecosystem. As such, to borrow a term more commonly used in business studies, conducting a PEST (political, economic, socio-cultural, technological) analysis can enable the drilling down into key details, to fully understand the enabling and disabling factors which have a significant impact on language issues in refugee camps.

In terms of political factors, for example, the legal status of refugees and IDPs (and of the camp itself) can dictate the freedom of movement enjoyed by the inhabitants of the camps. This in turn has a significant effect on their relationship to language; for example, if they do have freedom of movement, then what could be called their geographical zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) is enlarged, meaning that there may be both push and pull factors to engage with, use and learn particular languages.<sup>5</sup>

Economically speaking, depending on the location of a camp, there may be economic opportunities which a knowledge of a particular language – local, regional, national or international – might help them access. For example, at the Buduburam refugee camp in Ghana, Porter et al. (2008) argue that where refugees could speak Twi, they were much better placed to find work locally, thus yielding positive economic and social impact. In other camps, where technological access is good or the appropriate infrastructure is in place, entrepreneurial refugees have begun to offer outsourced services such as translation or transcription: Okoth (2012) estimated that refugee enterprises of this kind inside the Dadaab complex of camps in Kenya were worth US\$25 million a year.

Socio-cultural factors also clearly have a significant impact on language issues in different camps, for example the ethnic mix of the camp, and whether the refugees and IDPs are predominantly from the same area or from multiple countries or regions. The diversity between camps can be enormous. The overwhelming majority of inhabitants of camps in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey coming from one country, Syria, speak Arabic (albeit different variants) as their first language (L1). By contrast, 87 languages are spoken in Kakuma in Kenya, one of the most multinational and multilingual camps in the world, as estimated by a recent report commissioned by the World Food Programme and the UNHCR (Forsen

& Guyatt, 2016). In one of the camps, Kakuma 2, around half of the inhabitants are from Somalia, with the other dominant groups coming from South Sudan (17 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (14 per cent), Ethiopia (eight per cent) and Burundi (six per cent).

The technological infrastructure and the levels of mobile and 3G/4G/Wi-Fi connectivity in a refugee camp also have a direct impact on the pool of linguistic resources open to the inhabitants of the camp. Wall et al. argue that Syrian refugees, in addition to political, economic and social precarity, also experience 'information precarity' (2015: p. 6). The use of mobile phones by refugee and IDP populations can, depending on how they are used, focus these populations' language use on their L1 as they seek to maintain 'transnational ties' back home (Vertovec, 2009: p. 61) or, conversely, through accessing the internet on these devices, open up their linguistic world far beyond the human and physical resources located within the geographical boundaries they inhabit.

How can we conceptualise the role and purpose of language within refugee camps? This chapter argues that the work of Halliday is especially useful and relevant in this regard, especially his view that language is the 'creature and creator of human society' and his primary concern with 'acts of meaning' where the emphasis is on 'naturally occurring language in actual contexts of use' (2002: p. 6). Specifically, Halliday identifies seven functions of language, an approach which emphasises what people do with language rather than what he describes as the 'imaginary problems' established by Chomsky and others (Halliday, 1995: p. 236).<sup>6</sup> These seven functions can be broadly divided into two groups, the first of which is connected to *physical, social and emotional needs*, and the second to *an understanding and appreciation of the environment*.

The linguistic functions connected to the first group are:

- *instrumental* (i.e. expressing needs)
- *regulatory* (telling others what to do)
- *interactional* (forming relationships)
- *personal* (expressing feelings and opinions).

For the second group, the related linguistic functions are:

- *heuristic* (gaining knowledge about the environment)
- *imaginative* (creating an imaginary environment)
- *representational* (conveying information).

Smith (1977) adds three further functions which clearly have face value in the refugee camp context, namely:

- *divertive* (promoting enjoyment for the speaker and listener, e.g. telling jokes)
- *authoritative/contractual* (articulating codes of law, contracts)

- *perpetuation* (recording or memorialising passing events in documents – as opposed to orally – such as diaries, journals and letters).

This framework by Halliday will be used in the section on language acquisition in refugee camps reported below.

## Language of instruction

This chapter now turns to the first area discussed above, that of language of instruction in education scenarios, and considers situations which challenge the established view that mother tongue-based education is best.

In general, the debate on the issue of the optimum language of instruction appears to have been settled, with mother tongue instruction being identified as superior, specifically with regards to primary instruction. Benson (2005), for example, argues that given the opportunity to learn in their home language, more female students enrol in school, develop stronger language and literacy skills, stay in school longer and achieve better results. While the empirical evidence is very strong for this, notwithstanding the rush to English as a medium of instruction (EMI) currently being witnessed in many parts of the world, it can be argued that within the particular context of some refugee camps, especially those in more multilingual settings, there may be other, more pragmatic, considerations to consider.

One such issue is integration in the host community. As refugee situations become increasingly protracted, and children become more likely to either remain within the camp or become integrated in the host community, it might be more valuable to learn in the host language, especially if following a national curriculum. This would not only yield a deeper understanding of this language, but would also enable children to perform better, for example, in public exams.

A second issue is integration with other groups in the camp. If instruction is done in a shared language, this might help groups to mix with each other. Third is the question of what learning resources are available. At a local level, there may only be learning materials available in a particular language, for example that of the host community or English. In such cases, to be able to access this information, using non-mother tongue instruction may, in time, yield better educational outcomes.

The fourth issue concerns the pedagogical skills of teachers, and the fact that, especially in some hyper-multilingual camps, there may be no teachers in some children's own first language, or else the quality of education available might be much superior from a teacher (or teachers) whose first language is different.

6. See Halliday (1995: p. 236): 'Imaginary problems were created by the whole series of dichotomies that Chomsky introduced, or took over unproblematised: not only syntax/semantics but also grammar/lexis, language/thought, competence/performance. Once these dichotomies had been set up, the problem arose of locating and maintaining the boundaries between them.'

## Language acquisition in refugee camps: The reasons for acquiring language skills

Language acquisition in refugee camps, that is, learning new languages as distinct from acquiring skills in one's home language, is the second main focus of this chapter and will now be explored against the backdrop of the contextual factors and Halliday's framework outlined above. It will look at two overlapping aspects of language learning, discussed below, namely:

1. language as a means of developing resilience
2. language as a means of expressing identity and de-reification.

In this discussion, it is important to consider both the present needs of refugees and IDPs as well as their future needs, notwithstanding the fact that in many cases the future location and outlook for refugees and IDPs is not only unknown, but unknowable. In this, there may be a contradiction between the present and future selves of these individuals – i.e. the language which is of most use now, and what might be of most use in the future.

### Language for resilience

First, in terms of the role of acquiring language skills in developing resilience, it is worth emphasising how languages can do this. Language learning, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), is a mechanism for being – or at least feeling – in control, which is known as being a stress reducer. Masten et al. (1990), similarly, argue that learning new languages can be considered both a protective strategy and an intervention strategy to increase people's resilience in the face of adversity. Hatoss (2012) writes about the importance of language skills in developing resilience in the peri-migratory process, citing the example of Keer, an Ethiopian refugee. On his journey through Sudan and Kenya, he and his family received a great deal of support from local ethnic groups 'provided they were able to speak their language' (Hatoss, 2012: p. 107). In addition, a basic conversational linguistic ability 'made their everyday living safer' (*ibid.*).

A key recent publication in this field is Capstick and Delaney (2016), and their *Language for Resilience* report for the British Council. Within this report, five key interconnected factors are identified which highlight the relationship between language and resilience, namely links to education, access to training and employment, the development of social cohesion, the creation of institutional capacity, and the increased ability to combat trauma. It can thus be seen that language skills are highly transferable skills, the importance of which is highlighted in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which forms Annex 1 to the New York Declaration for

Refugees and Migrants, adopted at the UN General Assembly in 2016, where paragraph 13 explicitly notes the importance of 'transferable skills as an essential step towards enabling long-term solutions' (United Nations, 2016: p. 20).

### De-reification

Second, all too frequently refugees and IDPs find themselves in situations where they are 'reified', where they are turned into a 'thing', a passive object without agency. The reasons this happens are many and varied, and connected to factors such as low social status and statelessness. They are portrayed as perpetual subalterns.

To combat this 'othering', to echo Edward Said, language skills can be an important mechanism – not only for establishing identity for the individual concerned, but in being able to communicate with others in a meaningful way and to establish mental, emotional and physical relationships and networks. Capstick and Delaney argue this point powerfully, stating how 'language provides a voice for refugees so that their stories can be heard and understood' and also how language skills, via the 'safe space of a second or third language' can help to combat trauma (2016: p. 9).

The importance of language is strengthened if we consider resilience, as surely we must, to be more than just the absence of distress. To echo Gramsci et al. (1971), there is also potentially the risk that if the language learned is an international lingua franca, where the reason for learning is purely instrumental, the output is a piece of hegemonic cultural production. The refugees or IDPs will have a fabricated linguistic identity which may be reinforced by the way in which the language is taught as a fixed body of knowledge to be acquired, for example through emphasis on grammar and writing.<sup>7</sup> Such linguistic hegemony can also be replicated at the institutional level, with the power of language to include or exclude stakeholders (McEntee-Atalianis, 2016). If multilateral organisations perpetuate linguistic inequity, then as Benson (2005) argues, educational institutions will continue to reproduce societal inequality.

## The influence of language policy on security and power-related concerns

Finally, to turn to the question of the security or power-related concerns that might arise due to language policy, there are times where language can be 'both an enabling and a constraining factor in the socio-cultural experiences of refugees' (Tanle, 2013: p. 875). It is important to be aware of this dynamic as refugee and IDP numbers grow and situations become increasingly protracted, since external pressures are likely to lead to

7. See Sowton (2019) for examples of language teaching situations in Jordan where knowledge about language is commonly valued more than the ability to use language.

increased internal pressures within camps, and, as has been seen before, language can be a very dangerous fault line in such febrile situations. For example, refugees and IDPs may already have developed negative mental and emotional attitudes towards certain languages or towards language policies and/or practices around them during the process of forced migration, where language can be seen as a proxy for ethnicity and by extension power, as in Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Greenberg, 2001).

The language experiences inculcated in the act of migration may be negative for refugees and IDPs, through their negotiations with passport brokers, agents and travel facilitators, and subsequently with statal and parastatal actors such as immigration officials and soldiers (Hynes, 2003). Thus, language can also become talismanic, something by which people 'cling to collective identity, nationality, citizenship, family, community, in order to belong, to reduce fear' (Davies, 2001: p. 20). Another potential problem area to consider is that of 'cultural corporatism', a process by which the dominant ethnic community within a group tries to impose its traditions on the rest of the community. Oh and van der Stouwe (2008) discuss this phenomenon with regards to the hitherto pluralistic Karen community in Burma, where it is argued that the Skaw Karen dialect has assumed primary status over other Karen dialects. Such division between what are identified as prestige and non-prestige forms of a language can be dangerous where competition for resources is extremely high.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

The issues related to language and how it connects to the lives of refugees and IDPs need to be much higher up the SDG agenda, to be appreciated as discrete entities in and of themselves. As refugees and IDPs are squeezed politically and economically at the local, national and international level, this becomes even more important. At their heart, the SDGs sit squarely within the Westphalian model, created and, ultimately, financed by nation states. Refugees are, by definition, excluded from citizenship of the nation state in which they reside, while – according to the United Nations Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) – 'the primary responsibility' for 'assistance and protection' of IDPs resides with the governments of the states in which they are found (OHCHR, 2019). Ignoring language issues may have the effect of creating division and contention, as well as denying hyper-marginalised groups the opportunity to develop transferable skills which they can draw on in whatever location they eventually find themselves.

Consequently, several areas can be identified for further development. First, a greater understanding of the specific contexts of individual refugee camps is necessary to identify language-related policies which are of the most

pragmatic benefit. Second, further research in this area would help to shape such interventions, and could be used by the wider professional community to identify evidence-based 'best practice' materials for language learning in these situations, including a recognition that while the cognitive and cultural benefits of mother tongue-based multilingual education are clear and well-recognised (e.g. UNESCO, 2003), in refugee/IDP situations, other factors may also be important in informing and shaping educational decisions around language. Finally, such materials need to sit alongside pedagogical approaches where the focus of language learning is on meaningful exchanges and communication, rather than the abstract, atomised, theoretical accumulation of knowledge which is commonplace in many teaching environments in refugee camps around the world.

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8. See Kuchah (2018) for an example of where the different language of instruction policies in francophone ('République du Cameroun') and anglophone ('Southern Cameroons') Cameroon can be seen as a proxy battle for the social, economic and political cleavages in the country.

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# 21. Digital literacy in language and development: Experience from the field teaching young Syrian refugees in Jordan and reflections towards future programme design in digital literacy

Alexis Lefranc

## Abstract

Syrian refugees taught in the British Council's LASER (Language and Academic Skills and E-Learning Resources) programme seemed unable to perform simple digital tasks. This elicited interest from the author, who researched the notion of digital literacy, a wide set of skills still poorly addressed in language and development literature and practice. This chapter reviews the concept as presented by Jisc (2015a)<sup>1</sup> and gauges related challenges in information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D). It concludes with a reflection on the need to develop compact, effective programmes that consider digital literacy in the learning process and connect the digital space with wider communities in the physical world.

## Introduction

This chapter is a reflection of research I began as a teacher in Jordan on the British Council's LASER programme. LASER is a European Union-funded course in language, academic and e-learning skills which aims to support the recipients to move on to scholarships to follow online distance education programmes leading to internationally recognised certificates.<sup>2</sup> I noticed that my LASER students seemed uncomfortable with a range of seemingly simple digital tasks. This prompted me to look into this further and I began to conduct research on the notion of digital literacy, a wide set of skills still poorly addressed in – but of increasing relevance to – language and development literature and practice.

In this chapter I will begin by describing the digital literacy challenges I faced when teaching young refugees enrolled on the LASER programme, and discuss observations and examples of research to shed light on

the nature of these challenges. I go on to explore the importance of digital literacy for development, and consider some of the specific problems facing refugees in this regard. I will then focus on some recent and current developments in the field of digital literacy for development, based on Jisc's framework for digital literacy and with reference to other frameworks, including the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and drawing on established and emerging research in this fast-evolving field. Finally, I will discuss a newly emerging digital divide, based on whether an individual has the necessary digital skills rather than access to ICT itself, and the implications for education in development contexts. I argue that development professionals urgently need to take into greater account the digital dimension of education in order to help shape this field while it is still undergoing rapid change, or risk losing influence to other actors such as tech entrepreneurs.

## Digital literacy: A practical issue

'OK everyone, do you all have a working computer?'

My students are Syrian refugees in their early 20s. Most of them live in peri-urban areas, as do a majority of refugees in Jordan. I have put them in pairs for a social media activity that involves creating an account on Tumblr (a social blogging platform) and browsing for blogs they like. It should be fun: Tumblr is a collection of creative and diverse writing activity, and the user can choose the categories displayed on their feed, from football to food, cars or fashion. One can also opt for 'safe' browsing (filtering any unwanted content) so that the activity is classroom appropriate. It is a great resource to encourage learners to read authentic English, and hopefully to engage in some writing of their own.

1. Jisc is the UK higher, further education and skills sectors' not-for-profit organisation for digital services and solutions. Known as Jisc since 2012 but, historically, JISC stood for Joint Information Systems Committee.
2. LASER programme website: <https://syria.britishcouncil.org/en/laser> Additional information about the programme is available online at: [www.moocs4inclusion.org/index.php/catalogue/41-laser-language-academic-skills-and-e-learning-resources](http://www.moocs4inclusion.org/index.php/catalogue/41-laser-language-academic-skills-and-e-learning-resources)

'Good. Now go to tumblr.com, and create an account.'

I had expected this to be the easy part. Are they not young millennials, aged 18 to 30, described by Prensky as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001)? In my early 40s, I sometimes feel a bit left behind when it comes to new technologies. The very fact that I should call the internet a 'new' technology says a lot about my relationship to the digital space. Prensky would have categorised me as a 'digital migrant': one of those who were born and grew up before the digital age, and who had to become acquainted with it as an adult, or a 'migrant'. While half the world's population is under 25 and was born after the World Wide Web, Syrian refugees are even younger, their median age just over 18. Surely, I reflect, they will be teaching me about Tumblr before I can even blink.

Yet, 20 minutes later, I find myself wondering why half the class has not managed to achieve a task I had deemed to be quite simple: create an account on a new social medium. Baffled, I help them one by one, only to witness sheer lack of confidence on their part when faced with a sign-up screen. Admittedly, it is in English and this might be a factor causing them to be flustered by the task. But they are A2.2 students, a higher elementary level where basic reading fluency is usually achieved,<sup>3</sup> and none of the language involved is very challenging. I ponder that there might be something else happening, but cannot quite work out what.

## Digital literacy: A developing paradigm

Digital literacy as a field of study remains fairly new territory. As early as the mid-1990s, the New London Group (Cazden et al., 1996) published a review of what they called 'multi-literacies': an approach to changing social environments where the notion of being literate takes on a range of new possible meanings.<sup>4</sup> The more recent concept of 'trans-literacy' (Sukovic, 2014) addresses the digital component of modern literacy, one that cuts across textual formats such as books and letters, reaching into social media, snippets of texts on a website and an ability to locate information in the immensity of the web space.

## Cognitive dissonance in teaching methods

As I examined the detail of what my young Syrian students could and could not do on the web, I realised that some of our teaching practices may have become archaic. For instance, in my experience as an English language teacher, email writing activities are still often done on paper – even in business English classes. It may seem like a logical step, as email writing tasks must be collected, corrected and/or assessed.<sup>5</sup> It did not immediately come to my mind that students could *actually email me*, their teacher, rather than hand in a paper. I initially felt reluctant to engage in direct online contact due to privacy and security concerns.<sup>6</sup> It also felt more complicated and difficult to chase papers electronically, rather than test students in class on their writing skills. I nevertheless decided to take the leap, spurred on by the need to save classroom time and the excited buy-in of my students who would now be writing emails from home, keeping lessons for speaking activities perceived to be more engaging. Moreover, my own life has become increasingly digital and having emails to grade in my work inbox is beginning to feel quite natural, more effective and less time-consuming.

I therefore requested an assignment for a formal email to be sent to me. I also asked students to submit it in Microsoft Word format, so that I could post comments and track changes on their writing – something I saw as the digital equivalent of using a correction code on paper.<sup>7</sup> In the following week I received attempts at formal email writing, with the spelling, grammar and syntax mistakes I would expect from A2.2 students. One unexpected aspect, however, jumped at me: dotted red lines under misspelt words and green ones below syntax errors. My initial reaction was to think that I had made a mistake in asking them to use word processing software: surely, this would not be good for their spelling as they would use the spelling and grammar check function, foregoing a more genuine practice of the language. Yet once again, I was wrong: most of them were clearly not using spellcheck. Simple spelling mistakes that merely required right clicking and adjusting were left

3. Levels are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. See <https://www.britishcouncil.es/en/english/levels/a2> and <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/the-cefr-descriptors>
4. The New London Group is a group of ten researchers and educators who met in New London, New Hampshire (USA). They suggested moving from an approach of literacy limited to reading and writing towards a wider understanding including a diversity of communication channels. For a review of digital literacy as an evolving concept, see Belshaw (2012). For a comprehensive definition, see Gilster (2007). De Castel and Luke (1986, quoted by Warschauer, 2002) refer to a broad definition of literacy as 'having mastery over the processes by means of which culturally significant information is coded'.
5. This can actually be done online quite easily using a variety of virtual or blended learning environments (such as Moodle), learning management systems or dedicated social media (such as Edmodo).
6. Students could be using a public computer, leaving their data vulnerable to usage by a third party. They could use an unsafe email server. They may not realise that they're giving consent to share their data. To address this, I used my professional email, hosted on a secure British Council server. I made sure my students gave informed consent to direct email contact, and had access to a safe computer. All LASER students were adults.
7. A correction code is a simple set of signs used to label errors in a language task (for instance, GR for a grammar mistake). They help students self-assess and self-correct when their teacher-reviewed task is returned to them. For example: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/writing-correction-code>

unattended, and I found it hard to believe that this was intentional. I could think of only one reason why 80 per cent of my students did not use spellcheck, when it is much easier for them to do so than not: they did not know that it existed.

This elicited intense reflection on my part, and I began to read up on digital skills, competency, and literacy. Odd notions surged from the depths of the literature that I had never heard of before: web-to-store, identity management, LIS (library and information science), among others. I discovered something called 'techno-panic' (Marwick, 2008), a notion describing fear of the digital world and its contents. I read about the specific textuality of the digital environment, and related relationship mapping. I felt lost.

### Is a connection to the internet really a connection to the world?

Meanwhile my students seemed to be spending most of their time on WhatsApp. We had started WhatsApp class groups, which were very popular on the project. I was trying my best to harness this drive to engage in written communication through classroom activities involving mobile phones. Admittedly, it is literacy of a certain kind, strewn with smileys, abbreviations and shorthand, but as students gleefully mixed Arabic and English in their messages, I felt it could not be ignored. Their use of the social medium was sometimes difficult to manage as a teacher: I once caught students making arrangements for an evening out at the cinema on the WhatsApp group during class, something I felt quite annoyed about. I realised the digital group needed to be moderated as much as class activities, and that digital space management was not very different from classroom management. The space is different, but the principles at play are similar: behaviour must be coded, and rules in place.<sup>8</sup>

Since my students' use of the internet was clearly ubiquitous, I wanted to know more about the patterns of behaviour they engaged in. I ran a brief online survey where I asked about time spent on the internet each week, devices used and content targeted (websites, social media, WebQuests). The response was encouraging: 50 out of 60 solicited participants responded. The data is informal and only relevant to this particular learner group, but it did reveal that their online presence was mainly mobile and rarely went beyond messaging through social media or watching videos on their phone.

The reality dawned on me that despite spending hours online every day, most of these youths did not know much about how to use the internet beyond texting and watching YouTube. These activities are fairly similar to jotting paper notes and watching television, something I used to do in my teens. But they are not very skilled activities, and I kept wondering where the digital native competency flaunted by Prensky really lied.

Recent academic research into aspects of digital autonomy seems to have evolved along similar lines. Prensky's definition was formulated at the turn of the century, a time when the onrush of digital technology into daily lives generated multiple challenging situations in which youngsters would know more than their parents or teachers, from cameras to computers. Prensky portrayed 'digital natives' as intuitively mastering online tools because they had grown up with them. Some scholars have since challenged the notion as lacking depth (Bennett et al., 2008). According to them, Prensky's paradigm failed to fully account for the diversity of competencies among the digitally native population. While devices and the internet as tools are familiar to post-web generations, their usage may not be proficient unless a process of learning has taken place. This process is not automatic and occurs in unequal ways that can be correlated to several factors. Esther Hargittai reports a phenomenon she calls the 'digital reproduction of inequality' (Hargittai, 2008), whereby connection – or a lack of it – creates a new divide between those who do have access to information and communication networks, and others, who do not. Hargittai develops this idea further to identify core competencies in ICT use that define whether one can access opportunities in education, employment and what Bourdieu refers to as 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1973). Hence, Hargittai writes: 'Disparities in people's web-use abilities have the potential to contribute to social inequalities rather than alleviate them' (Hargittai, 2008: p. 943).

Cross-referencing this literature with my experience, things now looked different. It appeared that the common use of advanced technologies designed to make life much easier may mean that digital natives – and my students among them – actually lack autonomy in their use of the internet. Paradoxically, this could be making access to digital learning even harder for them than it used to be for previous generations: they do not (and, for many, cannot) write adequately formal emails, whereas my generation learned letter writing and was able to

8. This is an important aspect of online learning. Research on the topic is ongoing (Janson, 2019).

transfer these skills from paper to electronic format. They may not be able to find information readily, lacking the experience of a library, whereas I painstakingly transferred my shelf browsing habits in Dewey classification into a fairly competent use of digital search engines over a period of several years. And they cannot immediately use word processing, whereas I bought a book called *Word for Dummies* explaining the nuts and bolts of the software when I discovered this rather intimidating technology back in the late 1990s.

They do not expect to have to do this kind of background work, as I did back then. They expect the technology to be user-friendly, easy to understand and readily available for their enjoyment. This is what the digital market is selling them, and this is what they are buying. And in the case of refugees, they just do not have access to the support infrastructure that could possibly address this need for further training.

## Frameworks for digital literacy

These evolutions are reflected in a number of ways in our modern societies. Access to knowledge and the formation of identity<sup>9</sup> is a much more fluid process than it used to be in a non-digital world. Now that half the world's population is connected (Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, 2017), the ability to use digital tools competently is fast becoming an essential life skill. Several frameworks have emerged to account for this, with governments, the private sector and research institutions leading the way in defining key indicators for education, employability and soft skills.<sup>10</sup>

At the Language and Development Conference in Dakar, Alexandra Esimaje and Olarotimi Ogungbemi, from Benson Idahosa University in Benin and the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, presented their findings<sup>11</sup> on the use of vernacular language in hip hop music, including Pidgin, Yoruba, but also Chinese imagery and a variety of less common local languages. These demonstrated a level of openness that can only be achieved in a digital world, as reference frames developed rely heavily on web-sourced information, and the materials themselves

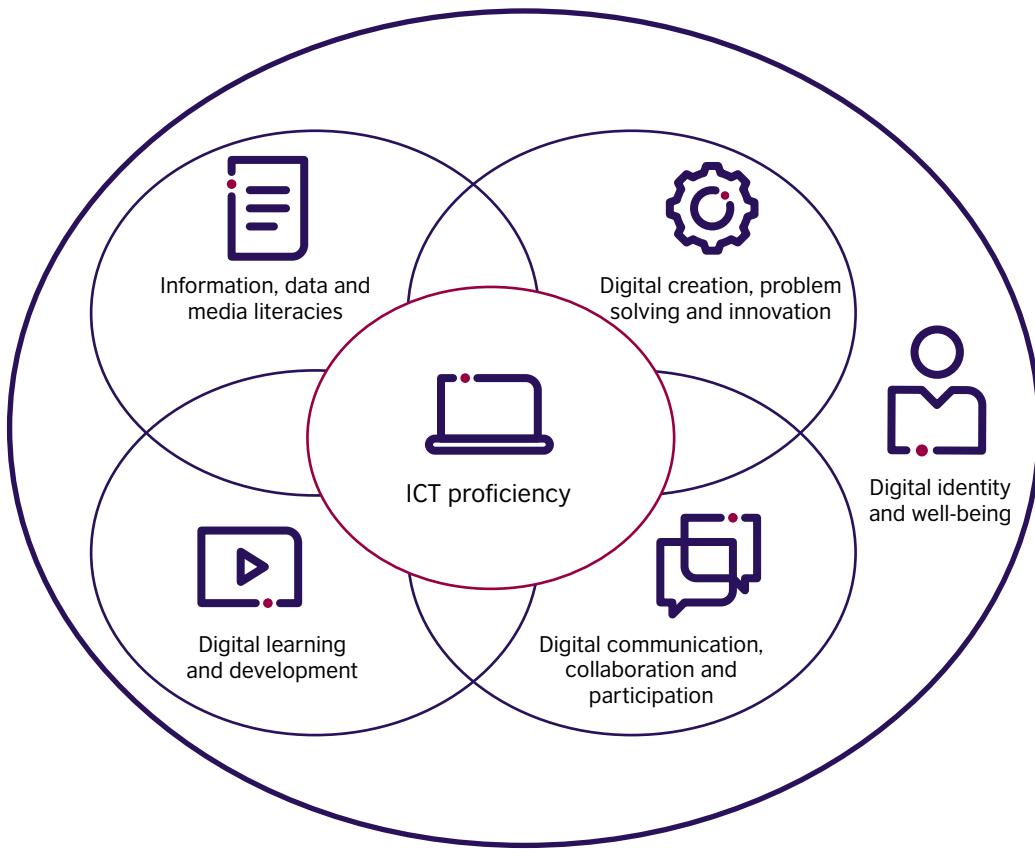
(musical videos and songs) spread through online channels. In another presentation, Lori Thicke, from Translators without Borders, insisted on the importance of digital access for local languages in health and citizen rights.<sup>12</sup> Language competency is only the beginning of the issue here, as the ability to use online tools is essential: competency with the device, the technology, the textual organisation of a website, app or software, the nature of information and the nature of online communication.

With refugees, some issues are of particular concern. Online security, for instance: where bullying, trolling and exposure to inappropriate content would be the primary concerns of parents in industrialised countries, refugees might be at risk from terrorist or criminal organisations, or even from the regime of the country they fled. If they come from remote and socially conservative areas, they may have received little exposure to international society and English-speaking communities prior to experiencing displacement. Hence, they could feel easily offended by online content they deem inappropriate in the context of their customary normative environment. They could also fail to decipher social codes originating in the richer core of global online spaces, especially on global social media platforms.<sup>13</sup> Last, but critical, they might not be fully aware of how their lives can be affected by their own digital footprint, and therefore neglect to manage what is now referred to as 'digital identity', a broad notion covering all online activities and profiles that remain visible, and therefore traceable, in time.

## The six competencies of digital literacy

This brings us to the Jisc digital literacy framework (Jisc, 2015b), hinging on six key competencies, as shown in Figure 1. It provides a clear visualisation of the core skill categories involved, briefly summarised below.

9. The process of identity formation in the digital space is a topic of intense research, including in situations of displacement (Thomas, 2007; Darvin, 2016; Diminescu, 2008; Diminescu & Loveluck, 2014).
10. Navigating the diversity of frameworks and approaches to digital literacy can be daunting. UNESCO, through its Institute of Statistics, offers a comprehensive review of existing options (UNESCO, 2018).
11. Esimaje, A & Ogungbemi, O. Vernacular language, ideology and identity in Nigerian hip hop music. Unpublished paper presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 27 November 2017.
12. Thicke, L. The opportunity of digital for local language accessibility on health, citizen rights, environmental protection and crisis relief. Unpublished paper presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 27 November 2017.
13. See Graham (2014) on internet geographies, who evidences that exchanges on the internet are predominantly by, to and about the rich core of the internet (Europe, North America, East Asia).

**Figure 1:** The Jisc digital literacy framework

Source: Jisc (2015b)

1. **ICT proficiency:** the basics. It means knowing how to use a computer and key software.
2. **Digital communication, collaboration and participation:** this refers to users being aware of communication channels available to them, and how to handle themselves using them (when making contact with strangers in a social media group, for instance). They also need to know how to control their public profile in relation to contacts they wish to have or not.
3. **Information, data and media literacies:** the ability to access information. Users might know that Wikipedia exists, but do they actually access it, and how? Do they use references and check information? Do they critically engage with content, keeping a sound distance between what they watch or read online, and what they actually believe the world is made of?
4. **Digital learning and development:** the awareness required to learn and develop professionally using online tools. This involves taking a step further from information literacy, developing an ability to locate key information, cross-reference sources online, access relevant forums and manage one's online credibility when engaging with a wider learning community.
5. **Digital creation, problem solving and innovation:** the challenge of using digital skills to create resources that can be widely broadcast or marketed. A key component of a modern digital livelihood, this could involve a number of competencies that are increasingly taken for granted by employers, from creating a spreadsheet to editing a picture, shooting a video or drafting a polished report.

These skills have become not only useful but also increasingly indispensable in the highly connected rich world. Many jobs can already be done completely remotely, such as accounting or software development. Others are partially open to remote work, and most now require an online as well as a physical presence. In any case, we do not say anymore: 'I hope this job does not require me to use a computer.' Connected computers are increasingly deployed in more categories of products, from a car dashboard to an AC system, a phenomenon known as 'the internet of things'. Their competent use is becoming a matter of survival as even banking has largely gone online, using platforms that increasingly look like social media accounts.<sup>14</sup>

6. ICT literacy, information, communication, learning and creation are the skills required to be digitally competent and manage one's own online **digital identity and well-being** (the sixth component in the Jisc framework).

This is an essential target under several SDG indicators (United Nations, 2015): SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

## A new digital divide: From *have-nots* to *can-nots*

Once the challenges of digital literacy are laid out, it becomes clearer that the notion of a digital divide based on connectivity alone is moot. Connection to online resources is not an achievement in itself but a mere first step towards a participative global digital space that is open to all.

Michael Carrier, in his presentation at the Language and Development Conference in Dakar, highlighted the importance of being connected to the internet ('connectivity'), a real issue for many populations in developing countries.<sup>15</sup> He described the introduction of new technologies that have made using offline devices with educational content affordable, with options to create local short-range networks between devices for communication purposes between neighbouring communities. Hence the connectivity challenge is gradually being addressed, through offline technologies or other creative solutions such as Google balloons, Facebook drones or local networks.

14. Situations vary significantly by country, with a connected core leading the trend. In the UK, 75 per cent of users bank online: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/286273/internet-banking-penetration-in-great-britain/>
15. Carrier, M (2017) English for the underserved: Alternative technology to close the digital divide. Unpublished paper presented at the 12th Language and Development Conference, Dakar, 28 November 2017.
16. For a variety of reasons that may include low literacy, lack of access to adequate infrastructure or mobile applications, and the deeply unequal nature of information in the digital space (Graham, 2014).
17. Launched at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, it has now become a multiple partnership named Digital Skills for Today. See <https://digitalskillsfortoday.org/about/about-refugee-code-week>
18. No Lost Generation is a joint initiative by UNICEF and NetHope. See <https://www.nolostgeneration.org/>
19. An annual event held in Paris in March. See <https://en.unesco.org/mlw>

The digital literacy challenge, however, is more problematic. Making technologies affordable to everyone is long and complex, but it takes even longer to train a whole generation in skills they are not aware of. This is the aim of a sector now referred to as 'information and communication technologies for development' (ICT4D).

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, connectivity is not a major issue and internet use is relatively cheap. The refugee crisis is, in some sense, a potential incubator for new experiences with digital literacy as Syrian youth are often well educated, comparatively well connected, and highly motivated. Yet the digital divide still applies to them: they often have devices and a connection, but cannot necessarily use them to study online, work online, or create networks of interest that would play in their favour.<sup>16</sup> They also need to deal with very complex personal situations, where finding help remotely could be of considerable value in dealing with government, seeking livelihoods, finding relatives, connecting with employment or education opportunities, or simply engaging with global society for leisure and self-development. The question therefore could be asked: how can the development community foster digital literacy in the interest of more autonomous education and livelihoods for refugees?

ICT4D professionals report huge issues with this, and entire projects seem to get bogged down because assumptions that were made about beneficiaries' ability to use technology did not turn out to be valid (Vosloo, 2018). The tech community is actively seeking solutions in Jordan, and events such as Refugee Code Week help bring actors of the sector together.<sup>17</sup> In February 2018, the No Lost Generation Summit gathered a range of professionals and organisations, including the British Council, coding boot camps for refugees, large NGOs Mercy Corps and Save the Children, global corporations such as Cisco and Microsoft, and a host of smaller NGOs seeking to make a difference.<sup>18</sup> UNESCO is running its own effort through a Mobile Learning Week.<sup>19</sup> They could well succeed, as many young Syrians wish to take their livelihood online, when much of the physical space around them is out of reach.

Such events are essential in generating synergies across the ICT4D sector, because the field remains quite fragmented. As things stand, there does not seem to be much consensus as to what digital literacy training actually means in a development context. The Jisc framework or the EU Digital Competence

Framework (Dig Comp, EU Science Hub Joint Research Centre, 2015/2017) are still recent and lack practice and evaluation. Universities and large educational institutions find it equally challenging to develop massive open online courses that manage to retain even five per cent of registered students.<sup>20</sup> The design of programmes varies significantly, from extreme 'accelerated learning' to digital labs set up in camps.

However, it appears that viable initiatives do share a crucial quality: they take the digital literacy challenge seriously. Programmes reporting successful outcomes seem to be those where digital skills are at the core of the training, not on the sidelines.<sup>21</sup> Feedback I have been able to gather as part of my MSc research with SOAS<sup>22</sup> also indicates that a specific curriculum fitting into clearly identified digital and physical spaces for learning and development is essential to ensure successful outcomes.

These spaces are by essence local and take into account the social reality of participants enrolled in support programmes. Successful programmes, therefore, do not consider the digital world in isolation from the community their beneficiaries belong to, or that which they are trying to join. They take into consideration its values, its specific interests, norms and how connections can be drawn with it far beyond the digital space. This may sound paradoxical, but digital competency also means knowing when and how to leave the digital world, and bond with wider, non-electronic reality.

## Conclusion: Not a fad but a trend

Language and development professionals should pay attention. As the world becomes increasingly digital and population booms in developing countries, the need for digital literacy and training addressing the gap therein will grow accordingly. Initiatives are developing and a variety of offers are taking shape. The British Council, for

instance, has been developing online resources for over a decade, including self-access courses. It has worked with educational technology companies to create a customised learning management system and a learning content management system.<sup>23</sup>

Development organisations must beware of being overtaken. The digital world has a tendency to disrupt established orders and create surprises. In the mid-1970s, an engineer at Kodak, then one of the largest photographic technology corporations in the world, invented the first digital camera. The company embraced it enthusiastically. However, when this market took off in the mid-1990s, it remained firmly anchored to its flagship product: film. Film was wiped out in a few years as digital conquered the world, and Kodak went bankrupt in 2012.<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, it may be advisable to think more boldly about the digital literacy dimension of language training. I was concerned when I saw that out of 50 sessions at the 2017 Language and Development Conference, only three had a strong digital literacy orientation in them – though not as the main focus. I regularly come across colleagues who do not use mobile phones in class, even for adults,<sup>25</sup> and never take their students to a computer lab.

Seeing major education providers focus on books and software as a core component of blended learning makes me nervous. Language textbooks take years to produce and by the time they are widely distributed their content is often obsolete. New software solutions that can be developed and distributed rapidly may be exciting and provide lucrative opportunities for publishers or education providers, but if the skills required to use them adequately are not being developed among students and beneficiaries, they may be worse than even outdated textbooks.

20. A well-observed trend in highly connected countries – see <https://www.ft.com/content/60e90be2-1a77-11e9-b191-175523b59d1d> In less connected areas the issue of access is an added challenge.
21. Such as InZone, a digital lab (<https://www.unige.ch/inzone/who-we-are>) and RBK, a coding camp (<https://rbk.org/>). Both work with refugees in Jordan and set clear physical and digital spaces for action.
22. Lefranc, A (2018) Displaced in a digital world. A study of the digital literacy challenge among displaced Syrian youth. Unpublished MSc research thesis in Sustainable Development. Centre for Development, Environment and Policy (CeDEP), School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Available online at: <https://www.academia.edu/42725537>
23. A learning management system (LMS) is an online platform that hosts learning content and tracks user engagement for learning purposes. A learning content management system (LCMS) is a digital platform that allows organisations to design and build their own online courses. Information received by email from the British Council LMS team stated that the British Council works with Thinking Cap, a US-based company providing such platforms for online learning that may range from corporate training to university courses. British Council online materials, including its self-access adult courses, can be found at <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/> Additionally, the British Council has developed Primary Plus (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/english/kids-teens/primary-plus>) and Secondary Plus (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/english/kids-teens/secondary-plus>), blended learning products that replace traditional textbook-based syllabi for young learners. These are used by teachers in face-to-face courses, as integrated products including an online platform and print magazines. For both these sets of British Council products (adult and young learner courses), I was not able to trace a pedagogical approach informing syllabus design that would be supported by education research into digital literacy. The British Council does publish relevant research on the topic (British Council, 2016: p. 27). Individuals I contacted at the British Council LMS team pointed out that: 'In many cases, digital offers are ancillary to print products, due to issues with technology infrastructure and other business reasons.'
24. See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tendayiviki/2017/01/19/on-the-fifth-anniversary-of-kodaks-bankruptcy-how-can-large-companies-sustain-innovation/#2a8aa3f66280>
25. Mobile phone use for children raises significant issues, including online security and the risk of screen and social media addiction (Turel et al., 2014).

Fast-developed learning management solutions may also tend to water down the sound pedagogy that underpins traditional textbook-based curricula, in a rushed bid to simplify educational materials and streamline their production processes. The fact that many such processes involve software developers and business entrepreneurs, rather than education specialists and development professionals, is a further liability. And how come, in the age of globalisation, we are still working with standardised content and cultural norms that only seem to be relevant to Western or rich world audiences? All this when at the swipe of a finger, I can hear my favourite hip hop song or get medical advice in my own local language. It seems obsolete.

Is the sector of language education in international development about to get leapfrogged by a clever tech entrepreneurial initiative? Some do think so (RBK, 2017). In any case, it may be well advised to go digital, as soon as possible – and open up to innovative literacy in the process.

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## 22. Mixing and matching in the classroom: Innovative approaches for maintaining and developing the multilingual skills of migrant children to facilitate social cohesion

Anne Wiseman

### Abstract

This chapter discusses different approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion and describes how a British Council project used these principles with teachers to help them integrate Syrian refugee students into their Lebanese classrooms, with the ultimate goal of facilitating social cohesion within the wider community. It draws upon current research in the field of multilingualism and social cohesion and is developed from a presentation made at the 12th Language and Development Conference held in Senegal, Dakar, in 2017, together with the discussions undertaken during the conference.

### Introduction and context

The 'Syrian crisis' has impacted on both Syrian and Lebanese children: Syrian children in Lebanese schools face issues around inclusivity, integration and language dissonance; and the Lebanese children have had difficulties accepting the influx of new children from other communities into their classroom. These issues can severely impact pupils' capacity for learning, and, if the teacher is unfamiliar with these contexts, they may struggle addressing the issues which can arise in a culturally diverse and multilingual classroom (Shuayb, Makkouk & Tutuni, 2014).

By 2013, it was estimated that there were 230,000 Syrian refugee children out of school (Shuayb, Makkouk & Tutuni, 2014) and since then the figure has risen. Lebanon had a population of four million, of which 1.5 million were registered refugees (the population of refugees was estimated at over two million in total, including unregistered refugees) and 482,000 school-age Syrian children with 63 per cent non-Lebanese in public schools. These figures give an indication of the scale of the issues to be addressed. But the numbers are not the only story. The refugee children arrived in the Lebanese classrooms with differing languages, educational backgrounds, worldviews and cultures.

Lebanon is a multilingual country.<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon to hear English, French and Lebanese Arabic spoken on the street, combined in one sentence or weaving through conversations. In Lebanon, English and French are taught as second languages from a very early age, whereas in Syria English is taught as a foreign language at a later age, and education has been disrupted for many refugee children in any case. This resulted in a situation where Syrian and other nationality students arrived in the Lebanese classrooms with lower levels of ability in English and French compared to their Lebanese peers. In addition to this disparity of language abilities, teachers were dealing with students with different language experiences reflecting the differing values which communities, such as the Bedouins, Kurdish and Syrians, attribute to education: in some of the communities, little value is placed on education as children, especially boys, are needed to work and contribute to the family income. As a result there were, at times, inter-communal tensions reported by teachers among the newcomers themselves and between the newcomers and their Lebanese peers, which emerged in the classroom (as noted by Shuayb, Makkouk & Tutuni, 2014). This led to problems for Lebanese classroom teachers for a number of reasons:

- the diversity of language learning and other experiences which the refugee children bring with them
- tensions in the classroom due to cultural difference
- feelings of intrusion/exclusion
- identity issues.

In 2013 the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) asked the British Council to design a project which would help the Lebanese school teachers of English and French to integrate Syrian refugee students aged eight to 14 into their classrooms. The project's design was agreed in consultation with the MEHE and it was part-funded by the EU; it was titled Accessing Education: Language Integration for Syrian Refugee Children.

1. See <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/lb/languages>

In this chapter, I describe in some detail how we set up this project, beginning with the approaches and influences which helped to define the project design, including a foundation based on a social model of inclusive education, a cultural-neutral (non-Anglocentric) classroom, and a focus on language awareness and translanguaging in the classroom. I describe the initial needs analysis and the pilot we conducted and how this influenced the final project design with a particular focus on the teacher training component of the project. I then show how the feedback from the participants indicates that the model was successful, further backed up by the outcomes in attitudes, policy and practice which were recorded. Finally, I discuss potential areas for further research in this area, in particular the potential impact of this type of project on the wider community outside the classroom, to the role of language in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable people.

## The Accessing Education project: Project design

A design was agreed comprising two main elements:

- an overall framework focused on the classroom, including teachers and students
- within the overall framework, a teacher training programme focused on teachers.

## Influences on the project design

### Approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion in education

The equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) approach undertaken within British Council projects follows a social model as described by Florian (2017) which aims to enable all learners to have access to and engagement with education:

*Inclusive education can be considered as that which ensures that everyone has access to a good quality education in systems that do not marginalise some through organisational and curricular structures that sift and sort learners on the basis of pre-determined judgements about who they are and what they can and should learn.*

**Florian (2017: p. 11)**

The social model contrasts with the medical model which defines the learners themselves as the problem. In the medical model a disability is identified and attempts are made to help the subject adapt to society's norms. Conversely, the social model puts responsibility on the system to adapt to the learner's needs, and supports an equitable approach.

The issue of exclusion requires particular attention. Exclusion can take place for a variety of reasons, for example due to barriers for people with physical disabilities or barriers related to a lack of language ability in the people of a host country to enable them to communicate with incomers from other countries. However, through adaptions and adjustments from a societal aspect a basis can be created which allows access and participation for all. The ideal scenario is to remove all the barriers and thereby remove any potential exclusion. Access is therefore related to removing barriers to ensure that young people can be educated regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability or health needs. It focuses mainly on policies and structures. At the same time it is important that learners are also engaged, and for this we need to ensure that what learners experience when they do access education is relevant, meaningful, empowering and beneficial. Engagement is therefore focused on the quality of the learning experience.

The Accessing Education project aimed to provide equity, access and engagement for Syrian refugee pupils in Lebanese schools, with the ultimate goal of encouraging social cohesion in the wider community through the work in the classroom, which encourages celebrating diversity rather than rejecting it.

### Aiming for a cultural-neutral classroom

In recent years there has been a shift in English language teaching (ELT) away from the dominance of the Anglocentric culture within the English language classroom, and a growing awareness of what the learners themselves can bring to the classroom (Holliday, 2013; Rampton, 2011).

The underlying aim of the Accessing Education project was to develop a cultural-neutral classroom (Holliday, 2005) by raising awareness of the positive benefits of a multilingual classroom, and encouraging teachers to celebrate the 'other' and listen to their students' stories, while at the same time training teachers to teach English or French as a foreign language. Holliday suggests that teachers need to capitalise on their students' backgrounds and stories which they bring to the classroom, and that maximising the use of the students' existing communicative competence is at the centre of 'cultural-neutral communicative principles' (Holliday, 2005: p. 143).

### A sociolinguistic approach to language security

The approach to the project design followed the framework formulated by Dabène (1998). This sociolinguistic approach attempts to develop the language security of the students by giving the same value to the students' languages and cultures – including the minority and undervalued languages and cultures (Bedouin, Kurdish, rural Lebanese, etc.) – as to that of the host society's language and culture.

## Influences on the teacher training programme

### Language awareness

A key element of the training programme was influenced by research on language awareness (Hawkins, 1984; Fairclough, 1992; Clarke, 1992) and its implications for the classroom.

The activities designed for the training programme were developed from the plurilingualistic approach found in the CARAP/FREPA framework, a Council of Europe project (2007). This included activities such as drawing sociograms illustrating the diversity of languages used by students in the classroom, pictograms, and activities involving the sharing of different languages in the classroom.

These activities helped students develop language security (by language security we mean feeling safe when using a home language, and identifying positively with a home language) by raising their self-esteem and by giving the same value to their home languages as for the languages of instruction. Both the languages the students were exposed to and the language they used in everyday life were identified as a support for language learning and changing attitudes. The approach promoted diversity as a strength and not a weakness.

One of the key advantages of this approach for the students is that the learning is portable: the children will have developed language security which will enable them to link the language and culture of their everyday life with the learning culture of the host country. This methodology enabled the teachers to help students develop strategies for autonomous learning such as the ability to identify vocabulary in their own language which is similar to that of the host country, or develop systems for learning on their own, which will continue to evolve and develop over time. It also empowered them to develop their own strategies and life skills for resilience in whatever situation they find themselves in.

### Translanguaging

Translanguaging was identified as a priority. As described by Heugh (this volume, citing Lin, 2013 and Van Avermaet et al., 2018), it can 'reduce sociolinguistic inequities in classrooms, facilitate student voice and agency, and prepare students for sustainable futures', and can be argued to assume porous or no borders between/among languages.

## Methodology

### Initial needs analysis and pilot

To design a project involving teacher training and development which also addressed some of the issues mentioned above, and focused particularly on access and engagement for all the pupils in the Lebanese classroom, an initial needs analysis was undertaken, in the form of a series of interviews with students and classroom observations. This was followed by a small pilot programme to test out some of the hypotheses made from the needs analysis, and was supplemented by an analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions of their home language.

### Findings from the initial needs analysis

The interviews and classroom observations showed that the problems faced by the Syrian refugees were not dissimilar to those of the Lebanese students in rural areas. The following list identifies the key student profiles which emerged from the needs analysis.

- **Profile 1:** students who enrolled in Arabic language schools and rarely in French or English language schools.
- **Profile 2:** Bedouin nomads, who do not link the benefits of regular education with their livelihood.
- **Profile 3:** Bedouin sedentary people enrolled in schools.
- **Profile 4:** Syrians in privileged areas enrolled in urban and rural areas and who have had access to regular education.
- **Profile 5:** Syrians in underprivileged areas and rural areas who have enrolled in seasonal schools. (Students are obliged to assist their parents in agricultural labour for financial reasons. Syrian schools adapted their schedule according to these key times throughout the year).
- **Profile 6:** students who had not attended school in the previous one to three years.
- **Profile 7:** Kurdish students from different regions. Some of them had been previously enrolled in Kurdish language schools.

Based on the identified needs, training materials were created and trialled which integrated socio-cultural awareness together with the principles of teaching English or French as a foreign language.

## Needs analysis: Second stage

Before attending the Accessing Education training, 1,200 teachers from ten different regions across Lebanon completed questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to analyse the teachers' perceptions of their role in motivating Syrian refugee students to learn a foreign language.

As the analysis of the questionnaires is qualitative (based on Blanchet & Gotman, 1992), a representative sample of questionnaires from 20 teachers (ten English and ten French) was selected. The selection took into consideration different teacher profiles found in the different regions of Lebanon, and ensured that the selected teachers' classes contained Syrian students from different regions of Syria and from different communities within those regions. Additionally, one English teacher and a focus group of her Syrian students, and one French teacher and a focus group of her Syrian students, were selected to be interviewed.

In addition to the interviews, the teachers were asked to prepare a speaking and listening lesson that was then filmed to analyse classroom interaction. No instructions were given as to what form the lessons should take. This was to evaluate whether the teachers could distinguish between listening and speaking skills and how they chose activities to develop them.

## Pilot

Following the needs analysis, a pilot teacher training course was conducted with 20 teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the draft materials and consolidate the conclusions of the needs analysis.

## Analysis of home language perceptions

The training course content within the Accessing Education project was based on an analysis of the teachers' and students' perceptions of their home language and other languages. An analysis was also made of the how the languages of instruction (English, Arabic, French or other) were linked to the students' communities' values. Classroom observations were analysed and showed how those perceptions impacted on the interactions between teachers and students in the classroom.

## Implications for the main project design

When the needs analysis and pilot were analysed, it became clear that other students in addition to the Syrians, such as vulnerable Lebanese and Iraqi and Palestinian immigrants, would also benefit from the teachers' training as it emerged that the teachers needed support in teaching and managing children in the multilingual and multicultural classroom, having little or no experience in this area.

The project therefore aimed to deal with teachers' perceptions around language safety, self-confidence, multiculturalism, integration and diversity – all of which would support the Syrian and other vulnerable students' education and development both inside and outside the classroom.

In addition to focusing on the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the newcomers in the classrooms, the project aimed to encourage positive perceptions of diversity within the pupils themselves, which in turn would provide them with the confidence and portable skills for learning which would be useful tools for students within a transient environment, such as those which refugees inhabit.

## Implications for the teacher training programme

The teacher training programme embedded in the project focused on social cohesion and inclusion in the English and French language classrooms. This was effected by raising the teachers' awareness around multilingualism, diversity and translanguaging.

Translanguaging was promoted within the teacher training programme: teachers were encouraged to reconsider whether using only the target language (English or French) in the classroom was appropriate. There was initially some resistance to this, as the pedagogy of teaching in Lebanon emphasises the use of the target language in the classroom as being of primary importance. However, there was more acceptance of the use of translation and translanguaging following the training courses which not only provided activities to support the multilingual classroom, but also provided the theoretical framework on which they were based, with the aim of ensuring that the teachers and trainers understood the rationale behind the activities.

During the teacher training programme teachers undertook all the activities which they would later use in the classroom. This gave them a chance to experience the activities themselves as the learners would, and to discuss and understand the pedagogy underpinning the activities.

Other focus areas for the teacher training included:

- valuing and making use of home languages in the classroom
- celebrating diversity
- raising awareness of the value of all languages
- accepting the 'other'.

## Feedback

The impact of the teacher training in the project was assessed by triangulating the three sources of data, i.e. teacher interviews, questionnaire results and analysis of the changes in teachers' perceptions of language awareness (attitude) and foreign language teaching (aptitude). This was then measured against the analysis of the filmed classroom interactions which revealed the training's impact on the teachers' practice in class with their students. The findings included the following:

### Attitudes

- Teachers became aware that the Syrian students' plurilingualism and pluriculturalism was not a weakness but a strength.
- The more skilled the teachers became at developing relationships and creating an atmosphere of linguistic security, the more confident the students became and consequently classroom participation increased.
- However, the teachers needed more theoretical and practical input to acquaint themselves with students' sociolinguistic and sociocultural profiles.

### Aptitude

- Teachers accepted the use of students' home languages in the classroom at times, which both encouraged the students to express themselves fluently and helped them to feel more confident about making mistakes in the foreign language. This in turn increased motivation to participate in class.
- However, while strategies from the training were being used, the teachers still needed further training in this area.

## Outcomes

### Changes in attitudes

Results from the feedback and observations showed that the approach to developing language skills in the project helped strengthen the refugee children's resilience in a variety of ways: they became more confident about speaking and participating in the Lebanese classrooms, and a greater cohesion and acceptance of the 'other' was observed in the Lebanese classrooms where the teachers had undertaken the training within the project.

There was also a change of attitude from the Lebanese trainers towards training the teachers to integrate Syrian refugee students, as they had initially been sceptical

about taking a multilingual and sociolinguistic approach to teacher training. The change in attitude appeared to affect the teachers also: they became more aware of their own representations and relationship with languages and cultures.

The teachers themselves developed new approaches for teaching a foreign language which integrated helping all students develop greater self-esteem by raising an awareness of their multilingualism and multiculturalism. They also became more aware that teaching a foreign language should take knowledge and understanding of the students' world and culture into consideration, and that by helping the refugee students learn a foreign language they were also helping them integrate with the Lebanese students in their classes and into Lebanese society.

As a result of the positive attitudes of the language teachers, the refugees themselves reported a greater affiliation with their host classmates and felt greater strength to deal with living in a semi-permanent state in Lebanon (see data in the Appendix).

### Changes in policy

The discourse of the policymakers changed from that at the beginning of the training.

An analysis of the discourse used by ministry officials when making speeches or simply observed in informal conversations showed a different view of the 'problem' over a period of time – from a specific Syrian problem to a broader approach to children's rights to education. Formerly, the discourse used by policymakers would focus on teaching Syrian refugees only. For example, referring to a 2012 directive from the MEHE, we observed guidance for 'teaching the Syrian refugees foreign languages to integrate into the Lebanese school'. By the end of 2014, the language we observed was more inclusive and referred to 'the right of all vulnerable child refugees, immigrants and vulnerable Lebanese to go to school till 16 years old'.

By raising awareness of these issues with key stakeholders and the government of Lebanon via regular updates, meetings and project events, the project also supported the Lebanese state to apply the implications of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) signed by Lebanon in 1990.<sup>2</sup>

Another outcome at policy level, as a result of the raised awareness around integration and inclusion for all children, has been the requests from the two key educational institutions (the MEHE and the Centre for Educational Research and Development) to extend the project in different directions. It is now viewed as

2. For the text of the UNCRC, go to: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

beneficial to train all the senior trainers in Lebanon (100 in total), including those who did not at the time work with Syrian refugees, to ensure they are familiar with the key concepts around inclusion and equity in the multilingual classroom.

### Changes in practice

In terms of approaches and teaching methods the following changes were identified through observations and discussions:

Teachers:

- developed a new approach and new learning activities for learning a foreign language
- helped all students to develop greater self-esteem by raising awareness of their multilingualism and multiculturalism in everyday life
- were more aware that teaching a foreign language should take into consideration knowledge of the students' own world
- became aware that helping the Syrians and other newcomer students learn a foreign language is also helping them integrate with the Lebanese students in their classes and into Lebanese society
- accepted the role of translanguaging as a useful tool for helping students learn.

### Areas for further research

The Accessing Education project was innovative in that its impact went outside the classroom with one of the goals aimed at social cohesion within the wider community. Clearly, there is more work to be undertaken in this area. Too often education projects aim at improving a standard of education by focusing on one narrow area (perhaps improving teachers' language or their teaching of languages) while ignoring the social issues both in and outside the classroom, such as integration and access for all students, which might also need to be addressed to make learning effective.

Another under-researched area linked to the topic of this chapter is the role which language plays in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations. Research undertaken to date by the Language for Resilience<sup>3</sup> project established by the British Council (see Capstick & Delaney, 2016) has started to investigate this. It addresses the issues of sustainability in education for vulnerable populations and takes forward the discourse around language-related concerns for migrants and refugees. However, further research is necessary to enable educationists to understand how languages can support and possibly strengthen marginalised and/or vulnerable people worldwide.

3. See <https://www.britishcouncil.org/language-for-resilience>

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## Appendix: Data from interviews with teachers and trainers

The following extracts from some of the interviews and transcripts illustrate different aspects of the change in attitudes and perceptions around diversity and inclusion in the classroom.

### Marginalisation

*Well it was really interesting. The thing the problem of the Syrians here in Lebanon is that the feeling of marginalisation they feel like they are on the margin. They don't feel any more bits and pieces in our classes so the activities here helped them to have place in this big world.*

### Guidance Counsellor

### Multiculturalism and own cultures as motivators

*The sociogram and the drawing activities will give the students the chance to talk about their own experiences. And this will give them the feeling that everything which is related to their lives has a value.*

### Trainer

### Language exposure

*First of all, I was introduced as a trainee to many concepts mainly the sociolinguistics it's something new its new theory and also we have the language awareness as which my friend mentioned, as if it is a key to teach student those who are exposed to media to internet. Changing the problem into a solution it is just like a key to teach them.*

### Teacher

### Social and linguistic variations and adapting discourse

*The activities are designed in way which will help the Syrian students to use their native language and foreign language in different perspective.*

### Guidance Counsellor

### Challenging perceptions

*The letters and films [used in a training activity] created in every one of us the power of challenge, and that time when we cannot understand certain thing even if we try, we are able to understand it even if this language is different from our language if we try to use critical thinking, we are going to be able to overcome any difficulties that faces us.*

### Trainer

*The Polish letter and the Italian movie activities – they were constructed in very intelligent way, because it made us feel what it would be like to be a refugee in different context where the language is above your level.*

### Trainer

*The training was full of new ideas and new way of social thinking special with the refugees we thinking somehow [sic] is wrong with them.*

### Teacher

### Learning a foreign language is also integrating students into society

*I believe that this is a very good workshop for Syrian student integration with the Lebanese students in the society.*

### Teacher

### Acceptance of diversity worldwide

*The integration of the languages or the variation lets us consider it [...] could be the integration of different cultures from different areas of the world – it is not only for the Syrian people in Lebanon.*

### Trainer

*Till now when we talk about languages teachers dealing with languages as material the student should learn – should be able to talk, or write sometimes. They talk about culture but they never think about diversity or they never think about accepting the other.*

### Trainer

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